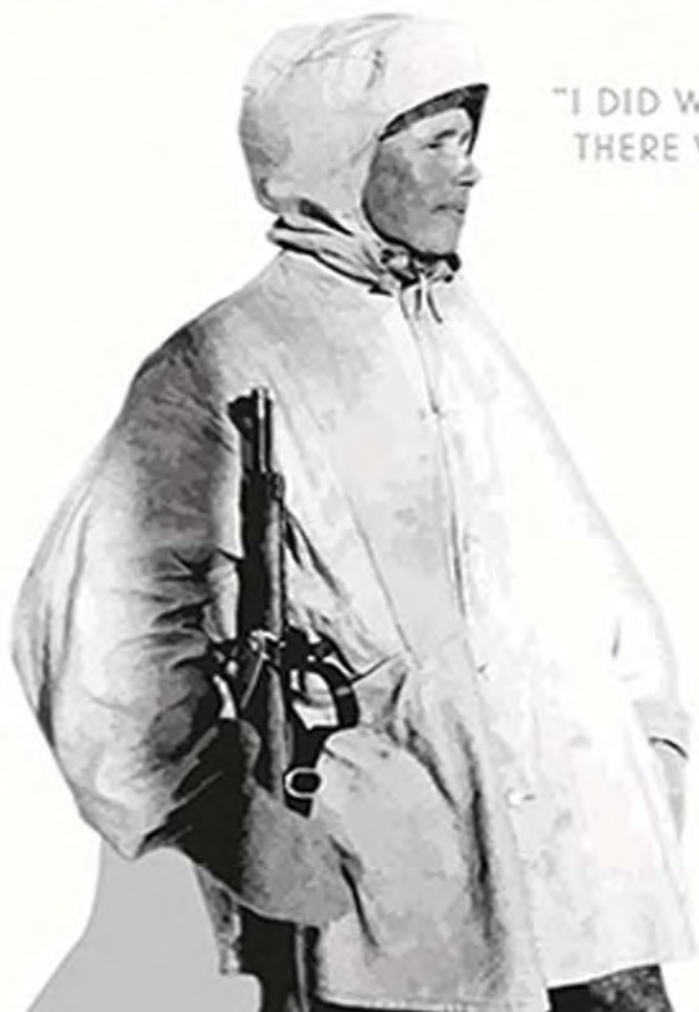


THE DEADLIEST SNIPER IN HISTORY

THE WHITE SNIPER

SIMO HÄYHÄ



"I DID WHAT I WAS TOLD TO, AS WELL AS I COULD.
THERE WOULD BE NO FINLAND UNLESS EVERYONE
ELSE HAD DONE THE SAME."

— SIMO HÄYHÄ

TAPIO A. M. SAARELAINEN

THE WHITE SNIPER: SIMO HÄYHÄ

Tapio A. M. Saarelainen

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Abbreviations:

JR Jaeger regiment
I/JR 1st battalion of a jaeger regiment
1./JR 1st company of a jaeger regiment

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Foreword

According to an American study, an average of 7,000 rifle-caliber shots was required to achieve one combat kill during the First World War. During the Vietnam War this number had increased to 25,000. Considering, however, that a professionally trained sniper only requires an average of 1.3 shots to attain the same outcome, these figures are startling.

This book is dedicated to one such sniper, the legendary Finnish hero, Simo Häyhä, who served his country with distinction during the 1939–1940 conflict known as the Winter War against the former Soviet Union. It is also known as the Russo-Finnish War but the term the Winter War will be used throughout this book. The main intent of this work is twofold—first, to explain the remarkable story of a man whose life spanned almost a century, and second, to honor a humble warrior who, through his personal example and achievements in combat epitomized the highest traits of a professional soldier who performed his duty to his nation without objection—he did what he was ordered to do and he did it well. Without hesitation, he fulfilled his duties as a soldier and squad leader; setting an example of courage and bravery that personified the unwavering Finnish spirit that helped unify this proud nation during these troubled times. Despite his wartime actions, however, Simo Häyhä avoided public adulation, preferring to lead a quiet, unassuming life after the war. As he humbly remarked to this author in one interview, “I did what I was told to, as well as I could. There would be no Finland unless everyone else had done the same.” To be sure, what Simo accomplished in the war was neither easy nor pleasant. As a sniper, his duty was to kill his target; an unavoidable assignment. And, as this book will confirm, he accomplished this task with unparalleled success.

In life, not all decisions are easy to make. This is what ran through Simo Häyhä’s mind during the early morning hours of the Kollaa dawn in December 1939. In preparation, as he would prepare for each of his countless missions in the Winter War, he carefully inserted each D-166 bullet into the fixed magazine of his rifle, conscious of the fact that the rimmed cases of this particular cartridge required proper alignment; placing each round ahead of the previous one so that all would feed properly and prevent jamming. When he finished, he checked the fully loaded magazine and began his silent journey to his position. There he would quietly remain, awaiting the sunrise that would help pinpoint the location of his Russian quarry. Then, his only thought would be, one shot, one kill. For a Finnish soldier defending his homeland, nothing else mattered.



Perhaps the most famous picture ever taken of Simo Häyhä. Field Marshal C. G. E. Mannerheim promoted Corporal Simo Häyhä to second lieutenant on August 28, 1940. In this way the Field Marshal showed his gratitude and admiration for the work done by Simo Häyhä. It was also in recognition of the Winter War spirit that Simo Häyhä had fostered through his actions on the Kollaa Front. No man in Finnish history has ever received this kind of promotion. The decorations awarded to him are also unique. They represent his extraordinary strength of mind and soul and his devotion to fulfill the tasks given to him.



Simo Häyhä at his studio apartment in Ruokolahti municipality on April 25, 2001. This was his last visit home. He was collecting his personal items before returning to the Institute of Disabled War Veterans in Hamina where he had been living for a while. He was very aware that he might not return. He was calm as we drank our last cups of coffee together in his home. The very last thing he did before leaving was to stand and take in the breathtaking view over Lake Saimaa. An unforgettable moment filled with melancholy but also with warmth. (Veikko Vento)

By the time Simo reached his position, it was still twilight, almost dark. The surrounding countryside was quiet, allowing Simo to think and prepare himself accordingly for the mission. Operating alone, far from friendly lines, he could ill-afford to make a single mistake. Nevertheless, he remained confident, certain that his years of military training, as a skilled hunter and knowledge of the terrain would give him an advantage over the Russians.



Map showing the location of Kollaa.

For anyone who has served in the military, accomplishing the mission is of paramount importance. Nothing less than total commitment towards achieving it is unacceptable. As a sniper, Simo Häyhä's mission was to kill the enemy; and his commitment in accomplishing this unpleasant task remained the central focus of his effort throughout the Winter War. His was a solitary, demanding duty; one which required him to endure the most extreme elements of Mother Nature. Anyone who has lived in Finland during winter will tell you it is not for the faint hearted. Furthermore, Simo Häyhä was responsible for the lives of other men. He was a squad leader, a non-commissioned officer, responsible for taking care of and setting an example for his soldiers on a daily basis. Yet so successfully would Simo carry out this role that he is often credited with unilaterally establishing what would become known to all Finns in this war as the "Spirit of Kollaa." Having said that, however, he never sought personal recognition for his actions, even though he was destined to become the most successful sniper in history—achieving a total of 542 kills. Simo Häyhä participated in the Winter War for 98 days. Unfortunately, during the very last days of the Winter War, he suffered a serious wound that came close to ending his life. But as Simo would be the first one to tell anyone, no one can choose one's own destiny.

In studying Finland's past, one cannot but wonder how history seemingly repeats itself. For, within the last 90 years, this small, proud nation of 3 million people would emerge free and independent in 1918 following the devastation of the First World War, suffer through a terrible period of violence in its own Civil War immediately afterwards, fight with unbridled heroism against unspeakable odds during the Winter War of 1939–1940, before enduring untold suffering and hardship during 1941–1944 in what this nation refers to as its Continuation War against the Soviet Union.

For over sixty years, however, Finland has remained at peace. But in my opinion, sixty years is far too short a period of time to risk becoming complacent. To be sure, the Finnish people have comfortably adapted to these years of safety, comfort and economic prosperity; one might even argue lulled into a “who would want to attack us now” mentality. But such an attitude can be harmful. For if the leaders of Finland are not careful, this proud nation risks once again the ugly fact that an unforeseen strike on her soil is a distinct possibility.

For those who would disagree, it is wise to remember the statement, “Si vis pacem, para bellum—If you want peace, prepare for war”; fitting words written by Flavius Vegetius Renatus, Roman military strategist and author of *De Re Militari*, a work dedicated to the discussion of military matters, who clearly understood and discussed the absence of military power. Renatus believed that if one's own homeland was not willing to employ its army to defend itself, it was certain that another nation would be more than ready to do so with its own military. Simply put, there is never a permanent absence of a military presence it's impossible to completed.

Constant vigilance is vital to the continued freedom and security of a nation and its people. This is neither a paranoid nor futile point of view as some may think during this period of stability and peace. To be sure, there is a cost and price for Finland to maintain such an army. It is, after all, the “People's Army”; reason enough to ensure it remains the most cost-efficient way to keep this nation independent, ready and prepared for what the future may hold. To think otherwise risks repeating the dangers of the past. The warning is clear—anyone who believes their nation can effectively react late to an attack on its own doorstep must accept the dire consequences that will undoubtedly follow. For then, it will be too late. The game is over before it even began.

The reader should keep in mind, however, that this book focuses on the life and accomplishments of one man, Simo Häyhä, a Finnish soldier whose role as a sniper and leader during the Winter War is legendary. It is not an in-depth history of the entire war. And though the events described here took place over sixty years ago, significant lessons learned from Simo Häyhä's experiences are still applicable today, if not more so. For instance, what a sniper faces today on the modern and future battlefield is a rapidly changing and tremendously challenging environment. Technological advances of course play a role, yet perhaps more important is the realization that unlike wars in the past, there are no “clear” front lines today. Battles are now fought simultaneously at all levels of command with multiple targets spread over a vast area.

Thus within this new environment, the modern sniper still remains a viable military asset. With proper training, he can attain significant advantages on the battlefield by destroying high value enemy targets of opportunity. Consequently, there must always be sufficient numbers of sniper instructors and trainees on hand for an army to effectively meet the challenges of the modern and future battlefield. This equally applies to a soldier's equipment, which must be modern as well. A small country such as Finland, with limited resources, can ill-afford to purchase outmoded material. Rather, it must continue allocating sufficient funds to buy the most modern and best-performing gear available. In recent years, this has been the case. But in 1939, on the eve of the Winter War, the opposite was all too apparent. As for Simo Häyhä, he experienced it first-hand. This is his story.

Over the years, much has been written about Simo Häyhä. Unfortunately, most of these works only contain second-hand information regarding his incredible life. Though more material has now recently surfaced, my personal interest in this legendary figure only began in 1997. Before then, I was only a “casual reader” of Simo's career; not too concerned about specifically collecting any research material on him. What limited information I did have was authored by others. To Finns, Simo Häyhä is probably best known from the popular book, *Kollaa Kestää* (*Kollaa Holds*) (1940), by Erkki Palolampi. Another book, *White Death* by Petri Sarjanen, also recounts his heroic exploits in the Winter War. One similar pattern from these accounts that I noticed, however, was that none of the authors were able to get close enough to Simo to conduct a personal interview. One reason for this was that Häyhä himself remained silent about his deeds during the Winter War, preferring instead to keep a low profile. At first, this made it difficult for me to identify topics I considered most crucial for my own book.

As I stated earlier, my main intent in writing this book was to honor a genuine Finnish hero. Yes, much has been written about this quiet, unassuming man, but I felt that a great deal of information was still missing. Since Simo firmly believed that his actions and deeds during the Winter War should speak for themselves, my most demanding and difficult task was to try and get this hero to talk to me. Accordingly, I was fortunate enough to get introduced to Simo in 1997 which eventually led to my becoming friends with him. This alone took a few years, over many phone calls and even more visits. During this time, I also conducted additional research and interviews with Simo's family members and others who knew him. In particular, I would like to mention two farmers, Raimo Partinen and Ensio Friari, who both contributed crucial information for this book. Knowledge is useful only when shared and Simo Häyhä's lessons for snipers are worth passing on to future generations so that his valuable experience does not disappear with the passing of this silent, modest person.

As a Finnish soldier and trained sniper, meeting and interviewing Simo Häyhä was a distinct honor. There I was, the young "apprentice," concentrating carefully on what he had to say, taking copious notes and asking innumerable questions. With patience and humility, he answered most of my questions when recalling the Winter War. Those questions he felt were too personal, he would not comment on. As one might imagine, he was a wealth of information. Yet, more important for me, I learned to know Simo Häyhä both as a kind human being and as a deadly sniper. As our discussions progressed, a special bond of friendship began to develop between us. Whether we were at my childhood home watching a video I had made of him, at his house talking over a cup of coffee, or in Room 5 of Kokkokallionkatu 2, his last address, if I felt that I missed a particular point, or was unsure about a certain issue, all I had to do was simply rephrase my question and ask him once again. He remained so pleasant and cordial throughout our talks; his memory amazingly sharp for a man over ninety years of age.

What I found most remarkable about Simo's accomplishments was that he performed his tasks with the same equipment as the regular Finnish soldier—including using only iron sights when firing his rifle. At this time, a scope on a rifle was rare—most Finnish soldiers who had scopes had in fact captured them from the Russians. This comment is not meant to disparage any Finns who served with honor as soldiers during the war but rather, to simply convey just how notable Simo Häyhä's accomplishments were. They were truly in a category of their own. His record of 542 kills has never been matched by anyone before or since.

Simo's area of operation during the Winter War was Kollaa, an area north of Lake Ladoga, which is also known as Ladoga Karelia. When we discussed the war, he appeared to remember everything as if it had happened yesterday; quickly recollecting, for example, specific times and dates when he crawled to firing positions in the early dawn hours or how often he would sit long hours in the extreme cold weather (sometimes -40 degrees Celsius), controlling his breath so vapor of his breath would not be spotted by Russian soldiers. He also related stories on how he would return to his commanding officer's tent, or other available accommodation after dusk, to first care for his weapon and gear, and then catch some well-earned sleep. There were also times, of course, when I had to review his answers on dictated tapes as well, or by watching our videotaped interviews in order to be certain about everything he told me. This only happened from time to time. In summary, most of my information came from Simo himself, or relatives and other people who were close to him. As mentioned before, some questions, such as the actual number of men he killed and what he feared the most, remained unanswered. This was Simo's decision which, considering everything he endured during the war, must be respected. Though I still had many questions to which I would have liked to have had an answer, I accepted his decision with professional understanding. After all, he was there. And in those instances where I felt there were gaps in his story, I did my best to research the history of the Winter War by concentrating, in particular, on the tactical aspects of sniping that might have influenced his decisions.

To conclude, writing this book was without doubt, a wonderful experience; a "labor of love" if you will. Surprisingly, writing turned out to be easier than anticipated due to the kind assistance of everyone who contributed their time, knowledge and helpful advice. After several years of effort, I now consider the first stage of Simo Häyhä's remarkable life and career completed—lessons learned from his experiences during the Winter War have been updated and entered into the Finnish Army sniper's manual, ensuring that future generations of Finnish snipers will benefit from those brave men who have gone before them.

The second stage of Simo Häyhä's story is this book. As the greatest sniper in history, he certainly deserves our attention. Please take the time to read and enjoy it as much as I have enjoyed writing it. For, as I previously

mentioned, military commanders should have sufficient numbers of qualified, trained snipers readily available in times of peace. For a nation to delay or postpone such important decisions until faced with war or an unanticipated crisis only invites potential misfortune for the men and women who proudly serve in its armed forces.

About the author

Tapio Saarelainen is a commissioned officer in the Finnish Army (Finnish Defense Forces). Shooting has been his hobby since childhood. For over thirty years, he has enjoyed small game hunting with both a rifle and shotgun. For the past twenty years, he has participated in championship-level matches in both hunter's round and game sports and has served as a judge and range officer. In addition, he has won several medals in competitive shooting with different types of rifles in various types of matches. He often practices shooting at targets up to 1,300 meters (1,450 yards) to maintain his marksmanship. In his career, he has served as training officer in various Finnish garrison units and since 1991, has trained and lectured conscripts, reservists and army staff personnel on sniping and precision shooting. To date, he continues to teach snipers with the Civil Defense Organization (participating in national defense activities is very popular today in Finland; with civil defense courses being offered throughout all age levels in Finnish society). For several years now, he has participated in competitions representing his own troop in various Finnish Army championships. Saarelainen has also trained for international deployment missions in Scandinavia and has served in international (UN) peacekeeping operations in Kosovo as a liaison officer for the Multinational Brigade Center in the city of Pristina. While there, he started writing this book, affected by what he had seen and how he felt.

As an active participant with various expert sniper groups since 1991, Saarelainen is the co-author of the 2002–2003 Finnish Army Snipers' Manual and a regular contributing author for *Kaliberi* magazine, a leading magazine for weapon enthusiasts in Finland. He has also written a number of articles for the Finnish military magazine, *Sotilasaikakauslehti*, a professional magazine for officers. This magazine published one of his articles on Simo Häyhä, earning him a scholarship from the Hannes Ignatius Foundation in 2003, which specializes in awarding scholarships for the best writers among its personnel. He was rewarded with a scholarship for the book *Sankarikorpraali Simo Häyhä*, the Finnish original of this book.

Definition of a sniper

A sniper is an elite soldier with specialist training, weaponry and equipment. Unlike an assassin, who will kill anyone without scruple and normally for a price, a sniper's targets are armed enemy soldiers and he serves as an integral part of a professional military organization.

A military organization invests a great deal of time, money and resources to train a sniper. Often operating isolated far from friendly units, he is trained to cope successfully under extreme physical, mental and environmental conditions. Accordingly, he is hand-picked from highly motivated volunteers and his training regimen is quite challenging and lengthy. The most important ones to determine his initial selection process are those in his immediate chain of command. Within the larger armies of the world's superpowers, snipers undergo separate, intense qualifying competitions and exams where the final decisions regarding the individual's capability to carry out such an assignment are decided. Most candidates fail.

A sniper is taught the basic skills of a soldier and how to obey the laws of war. He is trained throughout the year, day and night, both alone and with his spotter; the rationale being that he must learn how to react under all battlefield conditions, even when isolated and without logistical or intelligence support from friendly forces.

A sniper is given special training in precision shooting and other applicable specialized training. Such special training includes, but is not limited to, the following subjects: human physiology, survival and acting on the battlefield, estimating ranges, camouflage, advance and movement skills, basic requirements in setting up a firing position, moving to and from various firing positions, observing, field zeroing a weapon, target selection, destroying various types of targets, weapon maintenance, first aid, leadership skills and advanced shooting techniques. This is all for the purpose of ensuring that a sniper can accomplish his mission in the best possible manner, and under all possible conditions, without exposing himself. In many respects, a sniper must survive in order to justify the extensive time, effort and resources that the military invests in his training. Often operating alone and far from his

base of operations, he cannot afford to make any mistakes. He aims to kill his target with the first shot because, if he misses, he in turn becomes a target. Consequently, a sniper is one of the most highly valued yet arguably one of the most hated military assets on the battlefield. Understandably, the enemy will use all means available in their arsenal to eliminate this threat if and when the sniper exposes him. Throughout history, soldiers have even been decorated, promoted or received sums of money when credited for personally eliminating snipers in combat. Such is their importance.

Part I

Simo Häyhä's Official Record

Brief biography

Simo Häyhä was born on December 17, 1905 to Juho and Katriina (née Vilkkö) Häyhä in the hamlet of Kiiskinen in Rautjärvi municipality. This area was in the old Finnish region of Karelia, which is now Russian territory. He was a farmer by profession both before and after the Winter War. Simo Häyhä enjoyed several different hobbies during his lifetime, the most important of which were snow skiing, hunting and shooting. Finnish baseball was one of his favorite sports, with his preferred playing position being the front catcher.

He died on April 1, 2002 in the Kymi Institute for Disabled War Veterans, in the town of Hamina. Simo Häyhä is buried in Ruokolahti old church cemetery very near the belfry.

Civil Guard service and conscription service

Simo Häyhä joined the Rautjärvi Civil Guard at the age of 17 and quickly established himself as a top-notch marksman by winning several prizes in various Civil Guard regional competitions throughout the 1930s. In combat marksmanship competitions, he represented the Rautjärvi light machine gun group, a unit that won several competitions. Simo Häyhä also received Class 2 medals for his superior skiing ability and outstanding physical conditioning.

From late 1925 until early 1927, for a total of fifteen months, Simo Häyhä performed his conscription duty with Bicycle Battalion 1 in Raivola, and Bicycle Battalion 2 in Terijoki. Häyhä served in the following units:

Bicycle Battalion 2 (Valkjärvi)

1st Company, December 10, 1925–March 5, 1926

Bicycle Battalion 2 (Valkjärvi)

Corporal Training

March 6–June 1, 1926

Bicycle Battalion 2 (Valkjärvi)

NCO Training

June 1–August 18, 1926

Transferred to **3rd Company, Bicycle Battalion 1 (Terijoki)** where he served as a squad leader. Discharged on March 21, 1927.

Rehearsal training:

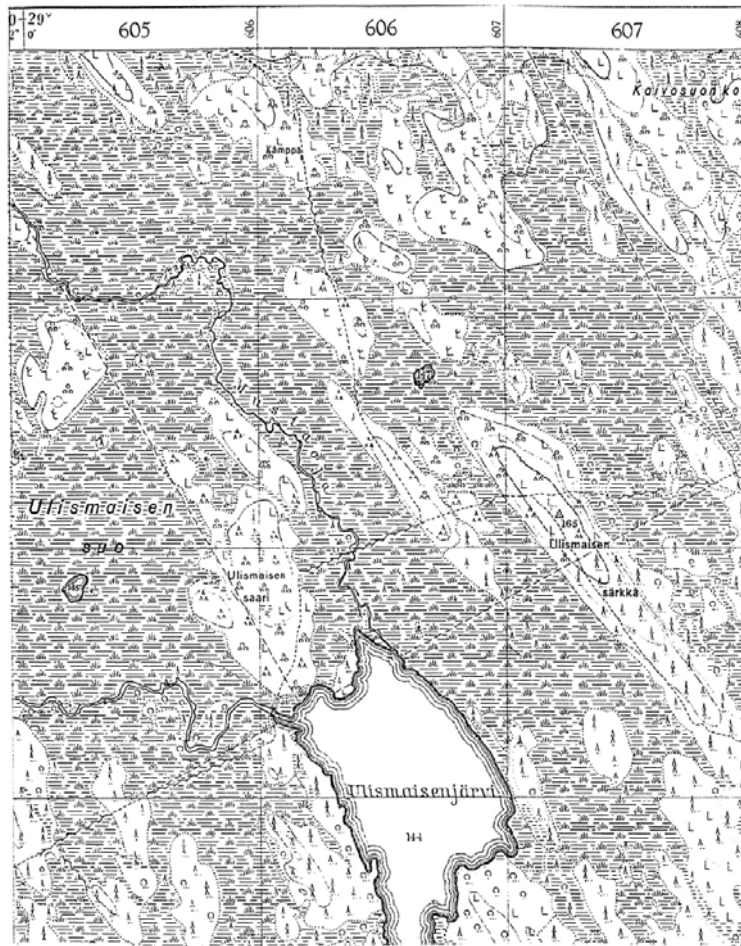
Sniper training conducted in Utti Training Center July 14–August 2, 1938.

Winter War

Simo Häyhä participated in what history refers to as the Winter War against the Soviet Union from November 30, 1939 until March 6, 1940; serving a total of 98 days with 6th Battalion, Infantry Regiment 34. The Winter War itself

lasted 105 days, but Simo Häyhä was wounded and hospitalized during the last week of the war.

Häyhä's Infantry Regiment 34 was established at the Huuhamäki garrison and commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Ville Teittinen, nicknamed "War-Ville." Häyhä's company commander from October 10, 1939 until May 31, 1940 was Reserve Lieutenant Aarne Edvard Juutilainen, nicknamed the "Horror of Morocco." Juutilainen earned his nickname while serving in French Foreign Legion in Africa. Simo also received his share of nicknames during the Winter War, including "Simuna" (which could be translated into Simegg) and "Taika-ampuja," the "Magic Shooter." Simegg is basically a friendly pun on his given name, Simo.



It was in this area of Ulismaa that Simo was wounded. A Russian infantryman succeeded in shooting Simo with an explosive bullet, which hit Simo's face and knocked him to the ground. The fighting was furious and close, with the enemy just a few meters or dozens of meters away at times. The Finns were trying to repel the advancing enemy by shooting and reloading their bolt action rifles as the enemy tried to conquer their defensive positions. Luckily, Simo Häyhä was evacuated in the last few minutes before the enemy rolled over the Finnish lines.

Battles

During the Winter War, Simo Häyhä fought in Kollaa and Ulismaa, Finland. Ulismaa was located about 15 kilometers south from Kollaa and about 60 kilometers from Lake Ladoga.

Wounded

Simo Häyhä suffered several head and facial wounds in the early hours of March 6, 1940 in Ulismaa during a Russian assault. Simo was hit by a high-explosive bullet fired by a Russian infantryman who was attacking his defensive position on the outskirts of Ulismaa. The bullet tore apart Simo's left jawbone and knocked out several teeth. Recovery took many years and included a total of 26 surgical operations.

Wartime accomplishments

Simo Häyhä is the best known and most skilled Finnish sniper in history with 542 confirmed kills, a number that almost equals the number of men in a Russian battalion.

Promotions

Simo Häyhä was promoted to corporal on June 1, 1926, during his conscription period. His promotion to NCO occurred during the Winter War, although the date is unknown. Field-Marshal Mannerheim promoted Simo Häyhä to second lieutenant, reserve on August 28, 1940.

Decorations

During the Winter War Häyhä was decorated on many different occasions; and was even presented woollen mittens and a pocket watch for his military accomplishments. His most notable decorations are listed below:

Wartime medals

I LK Vapaudenmitali

Medal of Liberty 1st Class

2.4.1940

(1st and 2nd Class Medals of Liberty were given to NCOs as decorations and badges of honor)

II LK Vapaudenmitali

Medal of Liberty 2nd Class

25.2.1940

VR 4

Order of Liberty 4th Class with swords

6.6.1940

VR 3

Order of Liberty 3rd Class with swords

21.6.1941

According to the orders dating back to March 21, 1950, only a soldier who has served in the rank of a captain or above can be awarded with the **Cross of Liberty, 3rd Class**.

Memorial Medal of War 1939–1940 with swords and a brooch

Cross of Kollaa, No. 4, made of pure silver. The original seven of these medals were manufactured from pure silver. The first four were awarded to Commander-in-Chief Mannerheim, the Finnish President Kyösti Kallio, Division Commander Colonel Svensson and Corporal Simo Häyhä.

Swedish honorary rifle

On February 17, 1940, Simo Häyhä was awarded a custom-built precision rifle made by the esteemed Finnish rifle manufacturer, Sako. It was contributed by Mr. Eugen Johansson, a Swedish businessman and great friend of Finland. The rifle was intended to be awarded to the “most distinguished shooter of the Corps.”

Peacetime awards

On November 20, 1978, at Kontioranta garrison, north Karelia, he was awarded the honorary title of Karelian Jaeger and Honorary Cross of the Karelian Jaegers.

In 1984, the Häyhä Family Association nominated him as their first honorary member. He also received

several awards for his nature and hunting habitat preservation work, as well as for raising prized hound dogs.

Among his many hunting accomplishments, Simo Häyhä received five consecutive awards for hunting small game between 1962 and 1966.

Summary

This concludes a brief summary of Simo Häyhä's accomplishments. What kind of man was behind such noteworthy deeds and astonishing statistics? In order to find out more about his early life, we need to take a journey back to a region in Finland known as Karelia and to the early 1900s.



ANSIOISTANNE
KARJALAN JÄÄKÄRIPATALJOONAN
JA SEN TOIMINTAPÄÄMÄÄRIEN HYVÄKSI
ON TEILLE

Maanviljelijä Simo Häyhä

TÄNÄÄN MYÖNNETTY
KARJALAN JÄÄKÄRIEN ANSIORISTI SEKÄ
KUNNIAJÄÄKÄRIN ARVO

KONTIORANNASSA, 20 pNÄ marras KUUTA 1978

PATALJOONAN KOMENTAJA

Evl

The unique diploma awarded to Simo by the Karelian Jaeger Brigade. On November 20, 1978 Simo was awarded an honorary title of the Karelian Jaeger and the Honorary Cross of Karelian Jaegers, in Kontioranta Garrison, north Karelia.



Simo Häyhä's medals; (top from left to right): Order of Liberty 3rd Class with swords, Order of Liberty 4th Class with swords, Medal of Liberty 1st Class, Medal of Liberty 2nd Class, Winter War 1939–1940 Commemoration Medal with swords and the Karelia bar, Cross of Kollaa; (below from left to right): the badge of an Excellent Marksman (Notice that the barrels are officially supposed to point upwards), Blue Cross of the Home Guards, and the Home Guards Practitioner 1st Class.

Farmer, Hunter and Civil Guard Member

Childhood in Karelia: 1905–1920

Simo Häyhä was born on December 17, 1905 in the hamlet of Kiiskinen in Rautjärvi. This area was lost to the Soviet Union after the end of the Winter War. Simo was born seventh out of eight children in his family. Simo's father, Juho Häyhä was the owner of the Mattila farm while his mother, Katriina (née Vilkkö) was a loving and hard-working farmer's wife.

The Mattila farm covered about 50 hectares (80 acres), part of which was forested and the rest consisting of farmland. In many respects, it was more of a "forest farm" since it could not support a large family through crops alone. Some domestic animals, such as few horses, some sheep and a pig, were also kept, both for work and food.

The farm was quite modern for its time, its fields equipped with sub-surface drains which allowed the growing of sugar beets for animal food. In addition to those animals previously mentioned, the farm had approximately ten cows which, along with occasional timber harvests, increased the family's income during the winter seasons.

Simo had four brothers and three sisters. One of his brothers, Antti died in the 1918 Finnish Civil War. A second brother, Juhana was wounded in this war at a battle fought in Joutseno. A third brother, Tuomas, died of sunstroke while working at a road construction site in Mietttilä during one summer. Sadly, death was a regular visitor in Simo's family during his teenage years. He simply learned to get used to it.

The farm comprised a main house along with additional buildings and sheds for the animals, grain and food. Painted yellow, the main house originally contained four rooms with a fifth one added later when Simo's family grew larger. Juho Häyhä would eventually transfer control of the farm to his son Juhana who, together with Simo and an older brother Matti, took care of it. Juhana's wife, Hilda and her three daughters Anni, Toini and Sanni also helped contribute to the everyday affairs of the farm.

During the winters, firewood was cut according to their needs. Simo's mother, Katriina sewed most of the clothes worn by the men herself. When they were old enough, Simo's three sisters, Mari, Katri and Hilja, were also taught this skill by their mother. All the girls had to sew and mend the men's clothes as their clothing had to endure the wear and tear of heavy farm work. Simo's mother created a warm, caring atmosphere in the household, and she was responsible for taking care of the spiritual upbringing of her children as well. Singing psalms and living in a religious atmosphere were familiar to Simo throughout his childhood, a fact he would remember much later on under the harsh conditions of war. In short, life was good as the family lived a peaceful country life.

As a child, Simo completed four years in Mietttilä elementary school and received above average grades. Academic studies, however, were not the driving force in Simo's life. He loved farmwork and decided at an early age that he would carry on his father's profession. For Simo, higher education was for those who were more eager to educate themselves. Simo was a practical man who simply loved the beauty of nature offered by farming and was happy to work hard.

Adolescence: 1921–1925

I had an opportunity to interview one of Simo's closest friends, an elderly farmer named Raimo Partinen, who lived during the same time as Simo and remembered his early years. Mr. Partinen was invaluable in providing his keen insight on the years leading up to the Winter War. As he recounted, "Simo lived at home until the war since he was a farmer. There were a total of five brothers and three sisters in his family. One of his brothers died young of an

illness. Another died in the Civil War.”

Simo Häyhä joined the Rautjärvi Civil Guard at the age of seventeen. At that age, he was not all that different from others in his peer group—inquisitive, willing to learn and adapt to new things when properly motivated. In Simo Häyhä’s case, he had both the motivation and love of his fatherland.

Simo’s first practice rifle was the M-1891. The Civil Guard distributed ammunition to its active members as well as it could, considering that there was a shortage of everything, including ammunition. The Civil Guard also distributed gunpowder, primers and bullets so that active members could reload their own ammunition. This meant that active members could train, practice and hone their shooting skills more often as they had greater amounts of ammunition for training. The reloading components were the same as in regular issue cartridges, with the same type of gunpowder and bullets. The bullet type was D166 and it weighed 13 grams, equal to 200 grains.

Marksmanship training in the Civil Guard

Simo distinguished himself during the 1930s as the elite shooter of his platoon in various regional (Viipuri) Civil Guard competitions. In combat shooting practices he represented the Rautjärvi Light Machine Gun Squad which had won numerous competitions. Simo was especially skilled with the brand new “Suomi” sub-machine gun, with which he also won numerous regional championships. The Suomi sub-machine gun was designed by Aimo Lahti, and was chambered for a 9×19 mm cartridge. Its official marking was KP 31 SMG. He was also awarded the Class 2 Medal for skiing and physical conditioning. During his Civil Guard time, Häyhä used a Westinghouse rifle chambered for $7.62 \times 53R$, which was precisely the same that the Finnish Army used as its official cartridge. In the Finnish Army the cartridge markings were $7.62 \times 53R$ while American markings were still listed as $7.62 \times 54R$. According to Simo, the Westinghouse was a quite an accurate rifle. Several years later he would purchase a famous 28-30 (serial number 60974) model rifle that he used for most of his legendary deeds in the Winter War. When I asked him how he obtained this rifle, he could no longer remember.

Simo Häyhä was a right-handed shooter, and always made it a point to shoot with his left eye closed. This enabled him to focus better with his right eye when looking through the rear sight. There is no doubt that Simo was a natural shooter. When, for example, he participated in his first competition in the 1930s, without having practiced, he shot a score of 93 out of 100 points from a distance of 300 meters. No wonder then that he easily passed the Civil Guard performance requirements for achieving the title Master Shooter, winning one competition after the other.



Simo sitting calmly and staring at the camera in the middle of the bottom row. Simo was a master with weapons and shooting. He joined the Civil Guard at the age of 17. He gained success in various types of shooting. He proved to be an expert with a new Suomi sub-machine gun and he also knew how to work the Lahti light machine gun, skills which proved to be useful in the Winter War.

Simo Häyhä was fortunate to be educated in the art of shooting by older, more experienced members of the Civil Guard. Many of these men were veterans of the 1918 Finnish Civil War and understood what was required of a soldier on the battlefield. During this time, there was no room for what they considered useless training; instead they concentrated on what limited resources and funds they had available to train their men in the most essential aspects of war, such as marksmanship. Considering the limited amount of ammunition available for shooting practice and zeroing weapons, every shot made by the young trainees was expected to be as close to the bull's eye as possible.

During his combat practice shooting exercises, Simo Häyhä represented the Rautjärvi Civil Guard's Light Machine Gun Squad, a unit renowned for winning virtually every single regional championship it entered. Fortunately for Häyhä, there was an opportunity for young Finnish men to participate in Civil Guard activities, basically regarded as a convenient "hobby" for a culture that valued and prioritized farmwork above all other occupations. As such, the Guard's activities were mainly restricted to weekends, as this was the time when farmers and other hard-working men rested and gathered their strength for the next work week.

During his service with the Civil Guard, Simo learned the importance of fast reloading. There is a story on how Simo's friends once gave him a number of rifle cartridges and told him to shoot as many times as possible in one minute at a target located 150 meters away. As the timer started, Simo began shooting. One minute later, he had fired a total of 16 shots and put 16 holes in the target. This was an unbelievable accomplishment with a bolt-action rifle, considering that each cartridge had to be manually fed with a fixed magazine that held only five cartridges. For those of us who consider ourselves well-trained marksmen today, such a feat would be impossible to attain however long we trained. Simo's uncanny ability to quickly reload after each shot meant that he reached the level of an automatic repeat performance.

During this time, shooting ranges were moderate and simple with the shooter simply laying on the ground in the prone position when firing at his assigned target. The targets were then inspected by the shooters themselves.

Shooters marked the hits and continued shooting. They changed targets to new ones when needed. The conditions, locations and surroundings in which the ranges were established varied considerably, which meant that the shooter had to really concentrate on maintaining proper positioning from the outset. The training makes certain aspects of marksmanship obvious. It was not only important to maintain proper positioning when firing but also to remain unseen by the enemy following that first shot. If the shooter's muzzle blast was observed by his opponent, he too became a target, unless he was able to get off a second shot to kill his opponent before he responded accordingly with fire.

The shooting practices went approximately as follows: to begin with, the leader explained the topic of the day's practice. When appropriate, he divided the group in two, with one half shooting and the other half spotting the hits from shelters near the targets. Shooters then patched the targets and prepared their firing positions as required. Following this, there was time to zero in a few shots, before the actual target shooting began. The spotters, when present, used a special rod to indicate where the shots hit the target and how shooter should correct his sights. After the shooting the groups were switched and the same was repeated with new shooters.

When the day concluded, the results were collected and compared. The leader analyzed the results and gave advice for further practice. Following this, the range was cleaned and anything requiring repair or maintenance was taken care of. It was not unusual to spend the whole day at Civil Guard practice, while the next morning the normal farm work started.

Generally, it is rare for a shooter to be equally adept on the range, in combat and in hunting. An elite soldier who can master all these skill sets, and has good control over his nerves, can become an excellent sniper. Simo Häyhä was such a man.

Joining the Army: conscription

The army was a direct continuation from the Civil Guard practices in which Simo had participated since he was 17. Simo Häyhä did his conscription service in 1925–1927, serving a total of 15 months. During this time Simo was promoted to corporal. After the mandatory conscription service he returned back to his home farm.

While he was still in the army, on February 16, 1926, Lauri Kristian Relander was elected President of Finland. In the same year, on October 21, Finland and the Soviet Union started unsuccessful negotiations for a non-aggression pact. The time was moving on and the dark clouds were seen above the Finns. The Winter War was on its way.

Hunter of Rautjärvi: 1931–1939

According, once again, to Simo's close friend Raimo Partinen, Simo enjoyed hunting in Rautjärvi throughout the 1930s. His closest and most trusted friend was his hunting dog, Kille, a breed known as a Finnish Spitz. Kille was fearless, barking at anything from grouse to moose. Kille was also reliable for spotting moose. In the hamlet of Partila, at the Hakala farm, Simo learned the skills of a hunter and trapper. Older men spoke to him about their practices and experiments; covering such topics as how to hunt moose, beaver, birds, small predators and such. Simo's specialty was hunting foxes, which are somewhat difficult to catch, even for a skilled hunter. During his life, Simo would shoot quite a number of foxes and also trapped many of them with irons.

Marksmanship training with the Civil Guard

Simo Häyhä joined the Civil Guard as a volunteer, giving him the opportunity to learn the basics of shooting at a young age. The Civil Guard consisted of men who considered themselves patriots, whose shooting skills and personal sacrifice ensured that Finland still enjoys its democratic style of government and independence to this day.

These men taught Simo everything from the theory of shooting to standard triangle aiming practices, as well as the various subsets of shooting such as how to execute a proper firing position, handling the rifle, aiming, breathing, squeezing the trigger properly and how to properly maintain his weapon. Therefore, by the time Simo received his baptism of fire during the Winter War, his skills as a marksman were well established.

A Civil Guard shooting trainee has to pass several tests in marksmanship. Shooting is clearly aligned with the other military education of the Civil Guard. A rookie starts as a C-class shooter until he has passed the so-called C-program (five exercises, the last one of them shooting at a distance of 300 meters, five shots from prone, minimum requirement 25 points).

Once promoted to B-class shooter, the individual could attempt to pass the B-program. The program consists of six exercises, the last one shooting at 150 meters and six practice shots. The shooter begins at the starting position, standing with the rifle at ease, loaded with one cartridge and safety on, five cartridges positioned in a cartridge clip in a closed pouch. The target is visible for 15 seconds and then disappears for 10 seconds. During the next stage, the target is visible for 6 seconds and disappears for 9 seconds. During the last stage, it is visible for 6 seconds and disappears for 14 seconds. Finally, the target is visible for 30 seconds. Three first shots are fired, one per each turn of the target, and the last three shots at the stationary target. The requirement to pass to A-level was a minimum of three hits on target.

Only after completing this stage, a Civil Guard member could continue to participate in additional training with individual combat shooting competitions. “A-Class” was also a qualification event for the Civil Guard regional combat shooting championship qualifiers.

As previously stated, shooting was very popular among Civil Guard members. To cite but one example of member participation, during the range shooting championships in the spring of 1937 (a Class “C” exercise involving 10 shots at the target), a total of 29,360 members scored at least 50 points. A corresponding combat shooting event (a Class “B” last exercise) resulted in 21,321 members scoring at least three hits. The average score of the top 5,000 shooters exceeded 80 points, which was impressive considering that the maximum number of points was 100. The same group exceeded 50 points in combat shooting, out of a maximum of 60 points.

Civil Guard Squad Combat Shooting Championships: October 1937

Championship-style combat shootings only began in 1930 when the President of Finland contributed the Official Bowl, which was awarded to the best rifle squad of all Guard districts during the annual military shooting championships. The first victory was scored by the Vaasa Civil Guard district. The championships consisted of a rifle squad, light machine gun squad and ranger squad competitions, as well as a track and field competition and a first aid skills evaluation.

The combat squad shooting was evaluated on the basis of the squad leader’s skills and overall performance, and the combat techniques of the squad. Both were evaluated on scale of 1–10 with the results combined for total score.

Combat shooting was evaluated by combining the actual score (points) of hits on the targets with the hit percentage of actual shots fired (each percentage point was worth half a point). The final score was the sum of these two divided by a number that was determined once the match was concluded. This dividing number was determined so that when the best score was divided, the result was approximately 20 points. The final score for a squad was a combination of its tactical performance score and final shooting score.

When judging scores on targets that represented an enemy combatant, the actual number of points was dependent upon how and for how long the target was exposed, the target size, the number of simultaneous targets involved and general conditions.

In comparing Civil Guard combat shooting practice to today’s combat shooting events, one can only say that it provided realistic conditions and excellent preparation for the approaching Winter War.

The following excerpt describes the general arrangements and instructions for a Civil Guard rifle squad combat shooting competition held on October 10, 1937.

Participants arrived to the venue, which was the village of Kouvola, and were given instructions which contained a brief description of the combat exercise about to take place in the near surroundings. (Squad leaders were given a map of the range area). Instructions stated that our own troops had entered the area from the south and just captured Kouvola. Our troops, which were still not at full strength, had gotten into contact with the enemy along the northbound highway that led to Ruskeala. Our troops had immediately commenced an attack on the enemy which had withdrawn further north.

After this briefing, the competition took place by simulating the “real” situation so that each competing squad was brought to a new position and it was given a new, more detailed description of their mission. A squad (one NCO, six soldiers) started their mission from an assembly area. Each combatant had 20 cartridges. The squad leader gave the orders according to the situation and the squad followed. The enemy was represented by targets which were either stationary or operated by mechanical assistance. Once all targets were either hit or unexposed, the squad had completed its mission. The stage took an average of 17–19 minutes for each squad. The scoring went as explained before.

Civil Guard members had received quite sufficient training by the time the Winter War broke out. Not all Finnish citizens were members but those who were, were fortunate in having the experience that would considerably improve their chances of surviving that cruel war in severe winter conditions.

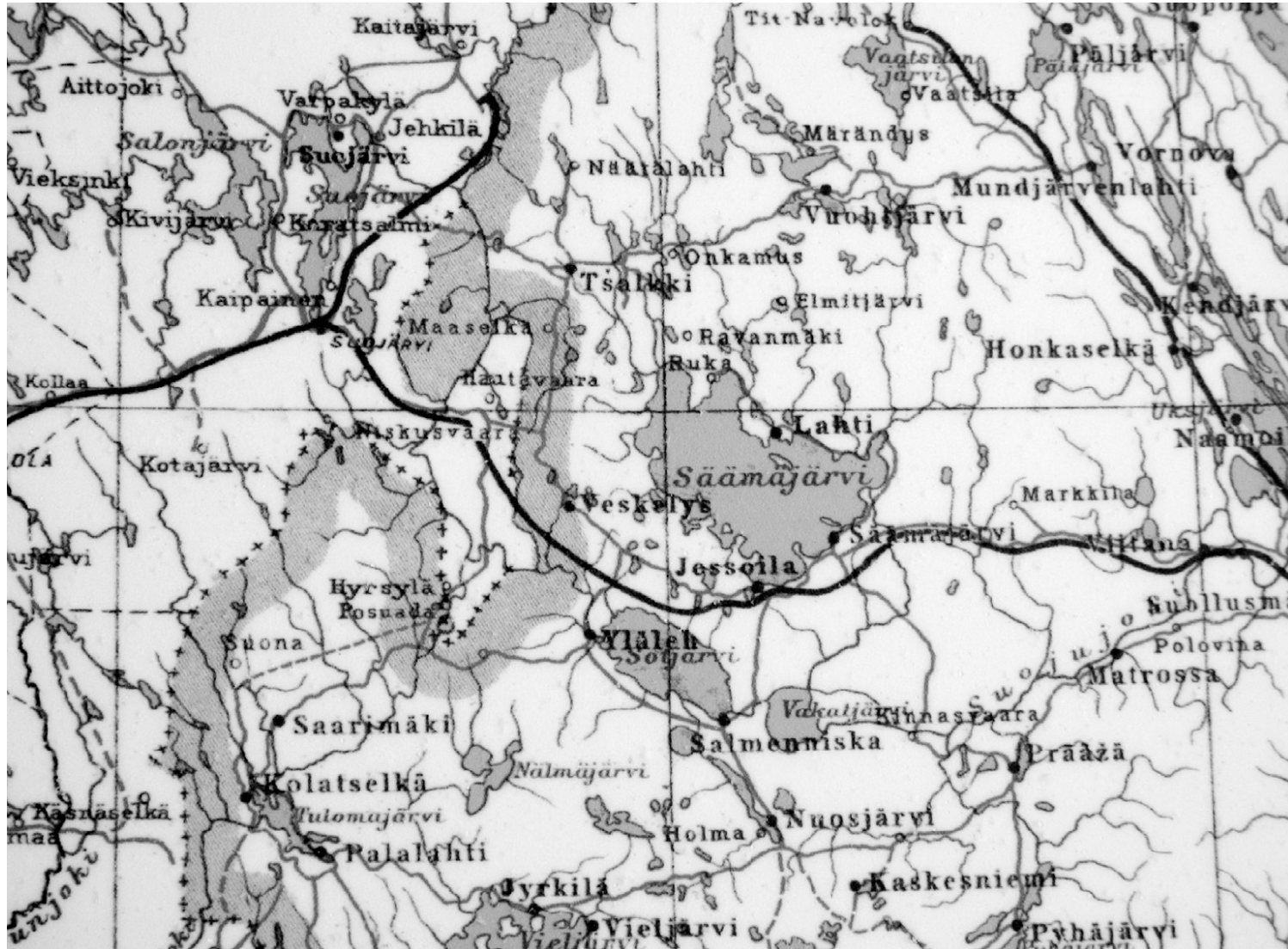
The Magic Sniper of the Winter War

Baptism of fire

On April 2, 1939, the Finnish government decided to start building fortifications along the Karelian Isthmus, the area located south of Lake Ladoga. Six months later, on October 5, the Soviet Union wanted to initialize talks on what it described as “current issues between the Soviet Union and Finland.” Since a mutual agreement between the two countries could not be found, the Soviet Union tried to provoke Finland into war on November 26, 1939 by launching artillery shells near the Russian village of Mainila, an incident known in history as the “Shelling of Mainila.” Mainila is located on the Karelian Isthmus, a few hundred kilometers south of Kollaa.

The Russians tried to blame this incident on Finnish aggression and demanded an apology. the Soviet Union then began moving a number of divisions closer to the Russian-Finnish border. When Finland refused to acquiesce to Russia and denied responsibility for what had taken place at Mainila, the Soviet Union attacked on November 30, 1939 with 23 divisions—totaling approximately 450,000 troops—thus starting the Winter War.

Soon after the Russians attacked, the Soviet Union created a puppet regime government on December 2, 1939 at Terijoki, a town located near the Russian-Finnish border, designed to create an impression of political and diplomatic legitimacy to the outside world. It fooled no one. Known as the Finnish Democratic Republic (or Terijoki government), it was little more than a “Quisling” government, led by the founder of the Finnish Communist Party, Otto Ville Kuusinen.



Kollaa is seen on the far left of this map. The enemy tried to advance at Kollaa during the Winter War. Russian forces attacked along the roads and the railroad to Kollaa village. When they were stopped in the direction of the roads, they tried outflank the Finns.

As for Simo's role during this time, he related the following account to me:

On the last day of November, I was in Suvilahti where I had been sent the previous day with some others to participate in an antitank course. That night we slept well; only in the morning were we told that the Soviets had started a heavy artillery bombardment against villages in Hyrsylä river bend, followed by simultaneous infantry attack across the border.

We took our time to have a good breakfast; followed by orders to each one of us to return to our own respective units. Well, this is it, we thought, the war had begun. Now I would be able to really apply for real all the skills I had honed when practicing for the annual Viipuri Civil Guard autumn shooting championships. I knew I was in excellent shape as I was extremely satisfied with my results during the last combat and range shooting exercises. I hadn't expected, though, that the next competition would be like this.

Once we reached Pyhäjoki, we assembled our barbed wire, fortified our trenches and finished digging our fox holes. The first Soviet attack against us came during the darkness. After a few days of heavy fighting, we were given orders to withdraw all the way to Suvilahti. There we participated in a minor battle to hold off the Russians once again.

One incident I will never forget: I was given a mission to destroy the telephone line. I did that and cut the wires, taking my time, although the Russians were shooting at me with a machine gun from a position about 200 meters away. I just couldn't think yet that I would be in any real danger as our losses in Pyhäjoki had been very low despite the heavy fighting and bombardment.

As this story shows, Simo was a brave and fearless soldier from the very beginning of the war. His story also reflects how in the early stages of this war the Russians were rather inept—their military leadership having been decimated

by Stalin's bloody purges only a few years earlier—while light Finnish losses did not give their soldiers any indication of how serious the fighting would become in the future. This was about to change.

Simo, who served in 6. /JR 34, received his baptism of fire along the Loimola road which leads west from the Hysylä river bend. He participated in the first battles in Suojärvi, along a little river that runs from Lake Pyhäjärvi. The Finnish troops withdrew to Suvilahti, from where they disengaged to the Kollaa River, some 30 kilometers away, where the Russian attack was brought to a halt.

The battle here was intense and bloody, as many men from Rautjärvi fell during the first days of fighting along the Loimola road. Sadly for Simo, more of his fellow villagers died during this period of fighting than in any other engagement. The pressure of the battle forced his unit to withdraw to Suvilahti, and then finally another 30 kilometers further back to the River Kollaa, where the Finnish troops dug in. It would not be too much longer before all of Finland would learn first hand what the phrase “Kollaa will hold” would mean.

A specialist for difficult missions

In the early days of the war, Simo's company commander, Lieutenant Juutilainen, discovered Simo to be an excellent shooter. Consequently, Lieutenant Juutilainen did not assign him to a specific squad but rather made him a sniper.

Simo's most remarkable combat engagement in the war came after an enemy sniper killed three platoon leaders and one inexperienced courier NCO who had been sent to replace one of the platoon leaders of Juutilainen's company. Juutilainen summoned Simo and ordered him to “try to knock that man out.” Simo replied, “I'll do my best.” Simo selected a suitable firing position but had to wait a long time. He had lots of layers on as the winter conditions were bitter and a sniper was not supposed to make any movement for fear of detection. In fact, he closely resembled a snowman due to all the thick layers beneath his snow-camouflaged fatigues. Daylight was slowly coming to an end. Evening drew close. After several hours of waiting, Simo noticed a flicker on the horizon; the last rays of sunlight reflecting directly off the Russian sniper's scope. In addition, the Russian rose rather carelessly, most likely believing that with the dusk approaching, his day's work was done. Simo carefully aimed at the Russian sniper, squeezed the trigger, and hit him on the cheek. Although Simo instinctively reloaded his rifle, there was no need for a second shot. The Russian was dead.

Simo also spoke of another incident, when Lieutenant Juutilainen unsuccessfully tried to kill an enemy sniper with a scoped rifle. Shortly thereafter, Simo was ordered to kill him and related the following:

It happened once that my CO, Lt Juutilainen, “the Horror of Morocco” as he was known from his previous service in the Foreign Legion, tried to kill an enemy sniper with a scoped rifle. This Russian had taken up position about 400 meters from us and was constantly shooting towards our lines. After a while, the lieutenant sent for me and showed me approximately where he thought the enemy sniper's position to be. One of our second lieutenants was with us, acting as a spotter, when our duel begun. At first, I did not see a trace of him, just a small rock where he was supposed to be. After careful investigation, we spotted him behind a little hump of snow near that rock. I took a careful aim with my trusty M/28-30 and the very first shot hit the intended target.

Since a sniper is such a high-value target on the battlefield, Simo's reputation as a marksman reached the Russian front lines. On one occasion, after Simo had once again finished off an enemy sniper with a single shot (of course!), the Russians in turn tried to kill him by shooting indirect fire, a mortar bombardment, at the vicinity of his firing position. Miraculously, Simo was not wounded or killed. He made it without a scratch. On another occasion, an artillery shell landed near his firing position and tore apart the back of his greatcoat. Simo survived this with only a minor scratch to his back and some understandable shaking. The enemy fire never achieved what was expected as Russian forward observers were simply unable to hit Simo with heavy concentrations of indirect fire throughout the war.

As Simo would confirm, the Russians put a lot of effort into trying to kill him:

Soon heavy artillery started sending their roaming regards. There was this forward observer and his crew nearby, and once I knocked out their sniper, they sent a swarm of shells in my direction from a rapid-firing cannon shooting direct

fire. About fifty shells landed around my foxhole but in vain. Many of them threw clouds of sand into my face, but nothing worse than that. Lieutenant Juutilainen sent a man to tell me to get out of there. “They’ll kill you there,” he said. Well, getting out of the foxhole was not really in my mind—so intense was the enemy fire.

Lieutenant Juutilainen was not the only man to understand Simo’s importance as a critical member of the Finnish war effort. He was often used on special missions and in those combat situations when ultimate precision was needed on the battlefield. At times, he was even personally summoned by car or horse-drawn sleigh to other sectors of his battalion to undertake specific tasks as a sniper.

Once they told me from the HQ to go to the 5th company section to destroy the forward observer site where an artillery spotting periscope was sighted. There was another forward observer who was preparing fire for effect. I only got two or three shots at the forward observer’s periscope before the Russians started to shoot at us with heavy artillery fire. Shrapnel, tree branches and ash were flying all over the place, but miraculously we survived. However, it resulted in our aborting the mission and the spotting periscope was not destroyed that time.

Simo, however, never left his mission until it was accomplished and continued the story: “Later that day I returned to the scene, this time from a different angle. This time I got my shots out as the artillery fire was hitting further away and the periscope was destroyed.” Again, Simo did what he felt had to be done, using all of his skills as a soldier to fulfill the commander’s orders to the best of his ability.

This episode, however, does not end quite yet. As Simo continued his account, he remarked how the Russians were extremely angry about losing their valuable periscope. He remarked:

Russian artillery fire intensified all the time and now it was targeted against the accommodation bunkers of the 5th Company. There was a direct hit on one of the bunkers, but the men inside survived with minor scratches from flying pieces of logs. We estimated that although I had destroyed the forward observer and the seven-man team around it, there would be a replacement. And so it happened. Well, we repeated our performance and the new spotting scope was destroyed as well, although this one was a mono-scope instead the stereo-scope that we had destroyed the day before.

War booty

Serving as a sniper was not Simo’s only duty. He also participated in a number of well-executed Finnish counterattacks, which were typical on the Kollaa Front, made necessary by Russian penetrations. In Simo’s words,

On December 4, 1939 we disengaged from the battle because of the pressure of the enemy force, withdrew to Kollaa and started fortifying our trenches and preparing firing positions. We expected to be able to get some rest as we were quite exhausted after several days of heavy fighting. Our lull did not last long before the fighting started again. As far as I was concerned, it continued in that same region until the early days of March. By mid-December, the Russians had resumed their usual attacks, and after a while we started counterattacks on our behalf. The Russians were taken by surprise as they sat around four large campfires, and we crawled very close before opening fire. The resulting battle scattered the Russians in complete disarray and we captured plenty of booty from this trip. Among the items we captured were machine guns, submachine guns and four antitank guns.

This incident proved how careless the Russians were behind their own lines, while these brave attacks by Finnish soldiers often culminated in the seizure of considerable quantities of Russian weapons and other prized items that the Finns lacked. Throughout the Winter War, there was a constant shortage of combat material for Finnish troops; one major reason being that only a short time before the war began, Finland’s Prime Minister Aimo Cajander repeatedly had voted against funding for the military. When the war broke out, many soldiers were given only a cockade and a rifle; and it was not uncommon for Finish soldiers to be seen wearing mixed military and civilian attire, an outfit nicknamed “Model Cajander.”

Despite such disadvantages, the resolute Finns learned to adapt. In Simo’s case, he developed many standard routines that contributed to his success on various missions. As he would recall:

Of course I had to participate in many other attacks and recon patrols with my men, but one was like another, so it is pointless to comment on them all. Precision shooting [sniper activities] either alone or with a comrade was also the everyday duty and we got some remarkable results. We observed the enemy activity during the day and tried to figure out where we would find the most target-rich environment. When darkness came, I prepared myself a good firing position. I even packed the snow on the ground in a manner that it would not give me away by dusting from the muzzle blast. From a position like that, it was easy to shoot and I was happy with the results.

Combat comrade: Corporal Malmi

It seemed to me that Simo often did his sniper's work alone; though when he did have a spotter, he most often selected the same soldier. I tried for years to find out details about Simo's sniper practices, in particular the name of this comrade, who worked alongside with him as his spotter. Simo, however, wanted to protect this soldier's privacy, even decades after the war. After repeatedly asking about the topic, I finally got my answer in 2001 at the War Veterans' Institute in the city of Hamina. Simo's trusted comrade was Corporal Malmi. Unfortunately, I have no further information about this man, and I doubt that he is still alive. On the videotape I made of this interview, Simo mentioned working with Corporal Malmi only two or three weeks before the end of the war. Here is one story Simo told about his co-operation with Corporal Malmi:

In early February (1940), Corporal Malmi and I spotted a new area of enemy accommodation bunkers. The two of us set out to an observation post to learn what was going on there. We moved silently through the forest and got within 150 meters of the enemy bunkers, which were located between the front lines. We spent the whole day in our position and killed 19 Russians. They never learned where we were and dared not to send a patrol out under those circumstances.

Simo's success resulted in the Russians paying more attention to applying better cover and protection to their positions to avoid unnecessary losses. It also forced them to alter their tactics, at least at the company and platoon level. For example, they began to use more soldiers to protect their troops and conduct surveillance missions. And as Simo would attest, "after that night, the Russians built walls of snow to cover the bunkers and trenches connecting them."

Simo often departed his lines in the early dawn to undertake his sniper duties and would not return until late in the evening. When he did return, his accommodation was normally the tent of his commanding officer, the "Horror of Morocco" Lieutenant Juutilainen. Regardless of who Simo was billeted with, there was always someone appointed to ask him after he returned how many kills he had achieved. Personally, Simo never cared about his count and disdained the public attention gained by the numbers he is credited with. Never in our many interviews together would he ever tell me the exact number of enemies he killed, although I tried to ask that question many times over the years in various ways.

On December 21, 1939, Simo shot what would prove to be his highest daily tally of kills on record—25 confirmed kills. Prior to this, his record was 23 Russians killed in one day. By the time he achieved this amazing score, Simo was already credited with having killed more than 100 Russians. This record had been long awaited for in Simo's 6th Company, and now it was reality, it was looked upon by his fellow soldiers almost like a Christmas gift. Incredibly, over a three-day period, he amassed a total of 51 confirmed kills. Considering, however, that only one third of Simo's kills were actually confirmed, his accomplishments are even more astounding. Simo recalled the Christmas of 1939, stating, "the Russians did not give us peace even during the Christmas, but God was close to us. We sang psalms, had a Christmas tree and received many gifts from home."

During the night, Simo would often visit his favorite firing positions, making whatever preparations and improvements he felt necessary. He often observed the enemy from his side angle position and his accurate fire from this location in Petäjälampi (about 5 kilometers north-west from Kollaa), would take the Russians by surprise—many for the last time.

When Simo approached 200 confirmed kills, he started to receive other awards than just praise and admiration from his commanding officer. An unnamed individual from his home town region contributed several fine pocket watches that were given out only to the most distinguished combatants—Simo Häyhä being one of them. Some time later, he even received a wrapped gift from his commanding general on the Kollaa Front. Inside were a pair of nice

warm gloves, most likely knitted by the general's wife herself.

In December, the advance of Soviet troops came to a standstill as a result of numerous Finnish defensive victories. The most notable ones were in Taipale on December 6–7, again in Tolvajärvi, December 12–14, and then in Suomussalmi, December 26–30, 1939. The Kollaa Front would go down in the Finnish history of the Winter War as never having been broken. Time after time, the much smaller Finnish forces threw the Russians back with stubborn determination and unheralded bravery.

War of maneuver deep in the forest

The Finnish “forest warrior” who fought on the Kollaa Front attained a legendary reputation among the Finnish people. They spoke about this region with reverence, as one would of an individual hero, and with good reason. The Russians concentrated the majority of their manpower, material and firepower resources on the Karelian Isthmus, and were opposed by two-thirds of the Finnish army.

In such a confined region, there was not much room for tactical maneuvering on the isthmus. The situation was considerably different in the deep forests where there was ample space for movement. In this area, Finland's skillful mobile ski troops operated with virtual impunity and inflicted considerable damage on the Russians. The rural Finns were literally “at home” in such surroundings, and used their inherent knowledge of the terrain to gain favorable results. Here, they had the initiative.

For the Russians, however, Finland's sparse road network severely limited their options for advance. Particularly affected were the Russian support troops, whose reliance on heavy equipment tied them to the main roads. In the forest frontier, the Finns expertly utilized the two basic elements of the battlefield: fire and mobility. As they were familiar with the terrain, Finnish military planners were comfortable making tactical and operational maneuvers in the deep forests of Kollaa. The limited resources that were available to the Finnish forces could be easily enough moved through the forests into selected areas; even to the extent that Finnish soldiers gained brief spells of momentary “local superiority” in terms of troop strength over their Russian opponent.



The Spearhead of Kollaa. This monument of Kollaa stands near the main gate of the garrison of the North Karelian Brigade at Kontioranta, Kontiolahti, 20 km north of Joensuu. It stands there to remind younger generations of the sacrifice given for their sake—men fighting an endless fight in the freezing weather in the backwoods of Kollaa in 1939–40. Behind the monument lies Lake Höytiäinen.

The Kollaa Frontier was shaped by a series of successful encircling actions by the more mobile Finnish troops. Thus quick strikes, followed by carefully planned withdrawals, followed one after another. Along the main roads, the Russians may have had superiority in manpower and material. But on the flanks, the Finns held the upper hand in mobile warfare, employing recon patrols with considerable effectiveness to locate tactical weaknesses among the various Russian units. Thereby the tactical situation, the number of ongoing operations and their limited resources often influenced how, when and where the Finns would fight. On the other hand, at the furthestmost point along the Uomaa road, Finnish troops were forced to stay put to keep the Russians encircled.

The only thing certain in war is its uncertainty, and the Winter War was no different. And in this respect, the Finns were absolute masters of the uncertain as they repeatedly conducted surprise attacks at the unsuspecting Russian troops. After the first week of probing attacks, the Russians attacked in various fronts with much stronger forces than the Finns expected, with massed armor deployed as spearheads. At first, the impact on the more lightly

armed Finnish forces was catastrophic, causing occasional panic among their troops. The Finnish forces, however, quickly recovered from their initial shock and began to reorganize their defenses. As a result, the Russians were unable to advance toward Loimola according to their original plan and their rate of advance soon significantly slowed. By the second week of the war, the Finnish defenders had reorganized their defenses in such an efficient manner that they began to inflict considerable losses on the enemy.

During the third week of the war, the Russians launched an entire division into an attack across a front of approximately 10 kilometers in an attempt to break through the stubborn Finnish defensive lines. By December 18, however, their attack began to slow significantly, and soon they were unable to move forward any more. Rather than resulting in the expected success, the Russians suffered heavy losses. Meanwhile, the Finnish defenders regained their self-confidence, learned the enemy's weaknesses and successfully increased their counterattacks, which gave them more time to strengthen their defenses. The Russians concluded that a breakthrough was not possible with the available forces, and urgently sought more reinforcements which they believed would give them success in the battle.



The author Erkki Palolampi, left, and the sniper Simo Häyhä examining the map of Kollaa in the War Museum in Helsinki. The author wrote the book *Kollaa Kestää* (*Kollaa Holds*), which documents the events of the Winter War on the Kollaa Front. The book has been printed in at least ten editions.



Simo Häyhä pointing out one of his firing positions on the scale model of the Kollaa battlefield in the War Museum in Helsinki. Erkki Palolampi stands opposite Simo, listening to Simo's description of the battle and examining the possible Russian routes of advance.

The success on the Kollaa Front was achieved at the very last moment and to the Finnish commanders, it seemed as if the line would hold. As a result, the Finnish IV Corps went on the offensive and initiated an attack on their southern flank with the goal of cutting the Russian supply lines. The Kollaa Front had to be held with the smallest force possible in order that the attack to succeed.

As many in the Finnish High Command believed they would not have another opportunity, they maintained the initiative from the week before Christmas until mid-January. While the IV Corps spearhead advanced all the way to the shores of Lake Laatokka, the four Finnish battalions at Kollaa secured its extending left flank. The Kollaa Front extended all the way to Uomaa where a road passage from Käsnäselkä was blocked from the enemy. The vast forest area in the middle of the front allowed Finnish commanders the room to maneuver and they took advantage of it, employing creative tactical thinking. In summary, the Kollaa Front extended from the forests of Ulismainen all the way to Uomaa, making it one large operational area that fell under the command and control of the Finnish 12th Division that was initially raised in Karelia.

Along the Kollaa Front, Finnish troops were victorious, even though they were significantly fewer in number. The main reason for this was their skillful use of mobile warfare which constantly disrupted Russian plans, forcing them to protect their flanks and maintaining an ever-constant alert for Finnish counterattacks. The Finns were slowly decimating the Russians who, without reinforcements, would not have been able to continue the battle. By the end of January 1940, however, the Russians had sent another division to Kollaa, and were therefore able to once again go on the offensive. Though both sides were reinforced, the Russians had far more troops at their disposal. Soon, they had four divisions in this theater, which gave them the opportunity to begin steamrolling again along the roads

and widen their front.

Thus, for the last month of the war, the Finnish defenders of the Kollaa Front and flanks were under a continuous series of Russian attacks. In a relatively short period of time, the battle was fought along a 20-kilometer front. Since the Russians had no shortage of supplies, and their forward based logistics were now able to resupply their front-line forces, it was inevitable that they would finally attempt to make a decisive breakthrough.

The honorary rifle

For his accomplishments on the battlefield, Simo Häyhä was awarded a custom-built precision rifle made by the prominent Finnish rifle manufacturer, Sako. The rifle was contributed by Mr. Eugen Johansson, a Swedish businessman and a great friend of Finland. The rifle was intended to be awarded to the “most distinguished shooter of the corps.”

Pastor Rantamaa, who suggested awarding the rifle to Simo Häyhä during a discussion he had with Simo’s divisional commander, Colonel A. Svensson, recalled the matter in his book, *From Parliament to Kollaa*:

I had a certain suggestion which I wanted to present. There was a really nice honorary rifle sent from Sweden to be awarded for the most distinguished shooter of the corps and the decision was made rightly to grant it to Simo Häyhä. I suggested that Häyhä would be invited here to the HQ from his company, and that the Colonel himself would present the award for the Boy. The Colonel, a flexible man, immediately understood the great value added for the award and agreed right away. He told me to invite Häyhä right away to the HQ, and the presentation of the award would be done in the morning. Modest and silent, Simuna, Simegg, then arrived to stay overnight at Military Chaplains’ and the Commandant’s joint office, and was given a real bed for the night. The Boy soon fell asleep indoors for the first time in a long time.



On February 17, 1940, Colonel Svensson is reading a diploma to be awarded to Simo Häyhä. The Colonel holds the honorary rifle on his right-hand side. Simo Häyhä, right, waits and listens while the executive officer reads the text.



Simo Häyhä in Kollaa on February 17, just after he was awarded the honorary rifle. Simo had several nicknames. One of them was the “Magic Shooter,” which says it all.

Pastor Rantamaa continued his story on what exactly took place on Saturday, February 17, 1940:

I and Häyhä went to have a meal at the depot established at wailer Matjoi Plattonen’s house. At 11:20 was the actual awarding of the prized rifle. By March 7, a total of 259 confirmed enemy kills were made by Simo Häyhä’s trusty M/28-30 rifle with the serial number 60974. He is also credited with making an equal number of kills by using a light machine gun and submachine gun.

Here is the accompanying citation from Simo Häyhä’s award of the Honorary Rifle:

This honorary rifle from Sweden is thus granted to NCO Simo Häyhä in recognition of his great accomplishments as a shooter and combatant. His deeds—219 enemies shot with a rifle and the same number with a submachine gun shows what a determined Finnish man who fears nothing can do, has sharp eyes and whose hands do not shake. This honorary rifle should be considered equal to a medal given for equal accomplishments, and should be passed from father to son as a reminder for the yet unborn generations of the great deeds done by Simo Häyhä in the great war where the men of Finland bravely and with success fought for the freedom of their country, the future of their people and for the greater ideals of mankind.

At Kollaa Front: February 17, 1940
Division Commander, Colonel A. Svensson

Simo Häyhä’s honorary rifle, together with his uniform and medals, are now preserved in the Heritage Room of the North Karelian Brigade, which preserves the memory of Infantry Regiment 34.

Kollaa holds, Finland survives

The Winter War was not just an isolated war between Finland and Russia. Arguably, it should be regarded as one of the many violent chapters in the historical annals of World War II. It had great national, international and military importance; not just for Finland, but for the Soviet Union's political and geographical assessment regarding Finland and other Scandinavian countries. The presence and activity of the Red Army influenced other countries as well, even though Finland kept the Russians at bay. Had Finland failed, the consequences would have been felt across Scandinavia.



Simo Häyhä right after being awarded with the honorary rifle model 28. This rifle was not the one he used on the battlefield. Simo used his own rifle instead. His own rifle was the type M/28-30. Simo is enjoying the sunshine and getting ready to go back to the front to continue his seemingly endless work.

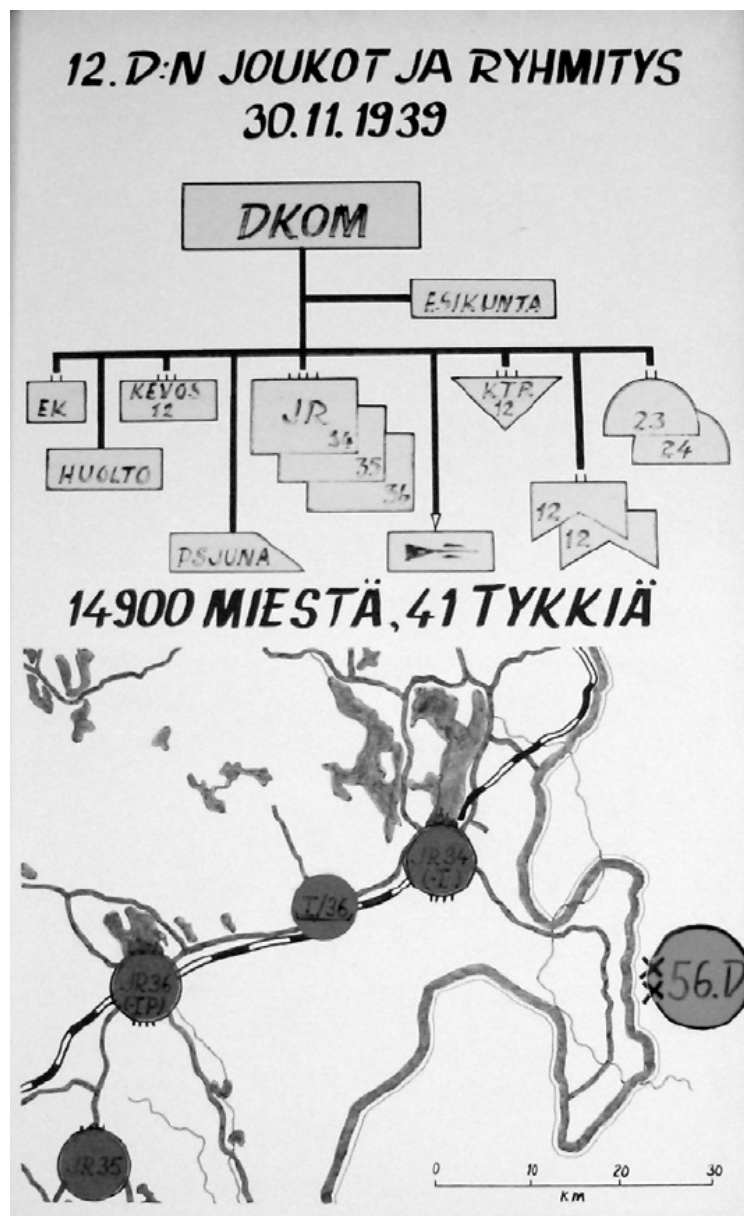
From a strategic point of view, the Kollaa Front was not a secondary theater of the Winter War but one of the most vital ones. By enduring, the Finns contained the Russian onslaught and saved their nation from being conquered. Fighting a series of successful battles against unspeakable odds, the Finnish defenders had their hands full yet never concerned themselves with what took place on other fronts. They remained focused on their mission and in doing so, set a personal example of bravery that created a winning formula for countless other Finnish battles in the Lake Ladoga–Karelian region, in Finland's defense in general, and in maintaining the independence of the nation.

The nature of the fighting became more mobile as the battles escalated, with reconnaissance and patrol activity over vast regions. By the end of the war, the troops of Finnish 12th Division were defending a section 60 kilometers wide, fighting simultaneously in trench, reconnaissance and encirclement warfare. As one would expect, the tactical

situation for the most part dictated the tactics deployed by the defenders.

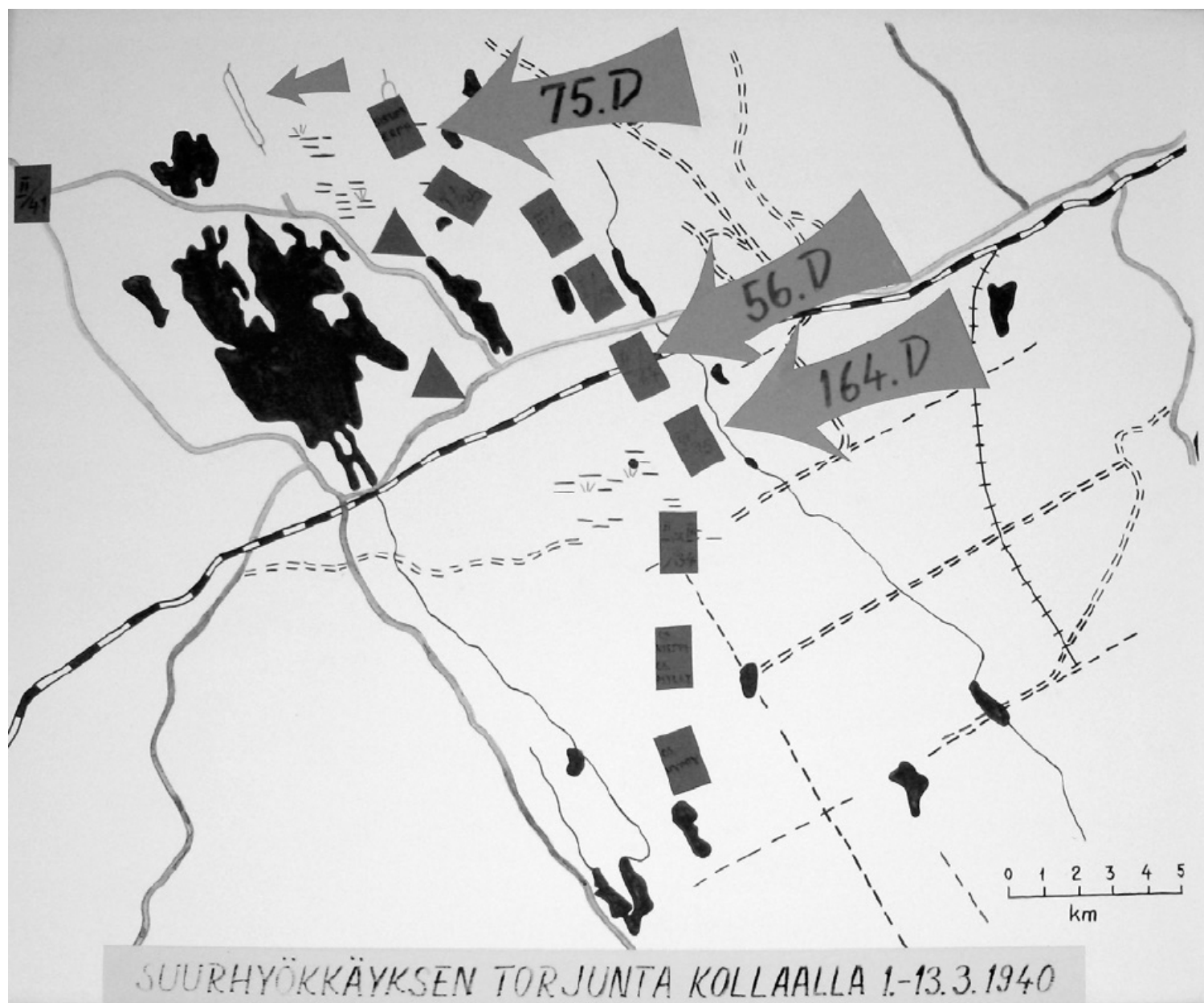
Relative strength did not favor the Finns and the struggle started to become intolerable. By then the odds were increasingly unfavorable for as the 12th Division was facing five enemy divisions. At least three of these divisions consisted of fresh forces and were at full strength for manpower and material. Each Russian division in Kollaa contained 12–15 battalions. The balance of power in Kollaa had become unfavorable and there was no way to change that fact by fighting alone. The enemy had five times the manpower and when it came to heavy weaponry, such as artillery, the situation was catastrophic. The enemy fired up to 35,000–40,000 artillery shells a day when the Finnish artillery could respond with a maximum of 1,000 shells a day. The enemy could destroy anything in their way by sheer artillery firepower. Under such a firestorm, digging in was useless, there was simply too much hot steel flying through the air.

On the Kollaa Front the enemy attacked along the railroad and highway with the same ferocity as in the center of gravity in the Karelian Isthmus. They needed a breakthrough so they used a devastating artillery bombardment, similar to that employed against other key targets. It was a small miracle that the front was sustained under such a pressure. When the enemy realized that a brute breakthrough was not possible along the highway and railroad, they spread out the front line to better utilize their superiority in numbers. The enemy was constantly seeking a weak spot in the defensive lines which resulted in ever-changing mobile warfare where attacks and counterattacks followed each other in a continuous, hectic stream. The Finns compensated for their lack of men and material with their smarter tactics. This situation remained unchanged until the beginning of March.



Battle order showing the formation or composition of troops. On paper, the 12th Division looks strong. Actually, it was the

case. On the other hand, the Russians had troops of the same kind, but manifold. The enemy was better equipped both in manpower and material. When it needed fresh and capable forces, all it had to do was to order them. On the Finnish side there were no more fresh troops or material. The reserves were already spent.



Battles fought in March 1940. The outcome of the war can be easily foreseen from this. The spirit of the Winter War was born in these circumstances and similar battles fought on the other fronts. Men were brave, knowingly fighting to stop a superior force from advancing, but they never gave up. They never left their comrades behind, whether they were wounded or dead. They were always brought home, no matter how difficult that was. (Robie Kulokivi)



River Kollaa, which was really more of a stream. On both sides of this river, there was lots of bloodletting. The winter weather didn't stop the heavy fighting in this area. This photo was taken during the truce in 1942.

Outside the center of gravity, the Finns had room for encirclement operations: “motti” sieges. Many Russian units and their heavy equipment were surrounded and the captured weapons and equipment played a significant role for the Finns. On the southern flank of the Kollaa Front the battle developed into encirclements of Uomaa and Siira roads. They were not easy battles and they required lengthy and consuming preparations. The Russians were to be allowed to advance to a certain area and then the Finns would envelop them. Maintaining the “siege” was very exhausting for the men; they had to keep the encircled enemy under pressure while at the same time prevent them from being resupplied or relieved from outside. Sometimes the encircled enemy forces tried to break out, which also required rapid reaction.

In Kollaa the enemy was supposed to be kept far enough east in the direction of Käsnäselkä road. This would protect the right flank and the heavy fighting of the neighboring division along the Pitkäranta–Impilahti road and in the region of Kitelä. The significant feature of these battles was the neutralization of strong Russian units by encirclement. The attacks launched by the Soviets to relieve the encircled were conducted in divisional strength but were still successfully countered. Controlling the forest area between main battlegrounds tied up Finnish forces but luckily the encircled Russians soon ran out of determination for effective fighting.

Towards the end of the war the materially superior enemy started to succeed in the focal areas of battle and in the center of gravity. The artillery superiority of the enemy was simply overwhelming. Armored spearheads struck deep into areas already devastated by artillery, clearing the way for the infantry following them. The enemy was not

short of infantry, especially towards the end of the war. Fresh units were brought to battle in a continuous stream. The advance was possible with the help of tanks. The effect and power of such attacks was tremendous and towards the end of the war there was no way of stopping them. The enemy had finally taken the initiative and was able to exploit success to gain more benefit in oncoming attacks.

In Kollaa, the survival of the defenders was possible only by protecting the flanks. Small forces of Finnish troops were sent to block the enemy from the flanks. Their success increased their self-confidence and made the impossible seem possible.

Divide and encircle

Holding the Kollaa Front was essential for the entire defensive battle, and the corps responsible for this region was a key element in the Finnish order of battle. The Russians attempted to make their decisive breakthrough on the Karelian Isthmus; and in order to speed up their goal, they tried to attack to the rear of the Finnish defenders on the isthmus by attacking around Lake Ladoga from the north.

That was the Kollaa Front. For the Finns, it was essential to keep the attacking Russian forces separated. One road was only large enough to enable a unit of a certain size to pass and the capacity of the road literally dictated the volume the Finnish defenders had to face. The Russian Army was unable to utilize the terrain to obtain their goal. This helped Finns defend their country. Another goal was to keep the enemy along the Loimola road as far east as possible, thus enabling the Finnish defenders to concentrate their forces on where the enemy was found to be weakest: the flanks of the main Russian force, and in the north their supply lines towards Lake Ladoga. The enemy movement had to be stopped east of Loimola and this goal was achieved with a few battalions positioned far enough east. This enabled the Finns to deploy the essential forces of the corps for a decisive counteroffensive.

The idea of encirclement was to totally isolate an enemy unit from the rest of the force. It was easier to destroy a surrounded enemy, or force it to surrender. When troops were encircled, the only way the enemy could possibly help was via the air. The Soviet Union did have air superiority and sometimes it tried to resupply its troops by air. This never had any influence on the end result of the battle; the enemy was either destroyed or forced to surrender to the surrounding Finnish forces. The enemy was encircled in Kitelee and elsewhere. The Kollaa Front had to be reinforced as the enemy attempted to attack in that direction to help its forces that were in a compromised situation in the south. The Kollaa Front acted as a roadblock; it protected the Battle Group Talvela, which had relatively small forces but because Kollaa acted as a buffer, it could hold the enemy all the way back in Aittojoki, and could send some of its scarce resources to assist other commanders in need.

The success of the battle in Kollaa provided relief further north as well, for Finnish troops on the Kuhmo and Salla fronts. As the Soviet Union had failed in its initial attack, it had to use the roads in the Aunus region to their full capacity, meaning that they had to give up any plans for expanded attacks there and could not proceed with the overall strategy to cut Finland in two halves down the middle. Its goal to isolate Finland from Sweden also never materialized.

The Kollaa Front held—it had to hold. If it had fallen, the whole Finnish Army would have been in a catastrophic situation. The single division, the 12th Division, tied down five enemy divisions in the battle. As the Soviet troops could not break through, they could not inflict the damage intended in the Soviet attack plan. They were literally kept out of the way.

In the Winter War, the Russians concentrated approximately 50 divisions against Finland, one tenth of them in the vicinity of Kollaa. The fact that Kollaa held, however, against such odds ensured that some relief for Finnish forces was provided in areas such as the Ladoga-Karelia region, as well as for the entire Finnish Army Group located on the isthmus. The battles in Kollaa also provided Finland with the time necessary to initiate an honorable political resolution to end the war, which finally came on March 13, 1940.

The battles on the Kollaa Front were characterized by a distinctive feature; that of creating a universal team spirit among the Finnish soldiers who fought there. This spirit gave them the strength to overcome adversity and encouraged them to perform far above and beyond the call of duty, far beyond the efforts normally expected from an average soldier. They were imbued with an extraordinary sense of camaraderie that time and again pulled them through conditions often described as inhuman. For example, taking their wounded to safety, regardless of the risk

involved, was always a top priority among the Finns who fought at Kollaa. Nobody was ever left behind; an unmistakable reflection of the Finnish courage and determination at Kollaa. The principle was same in all wars and theaters.

Simo Gets Wounded

Simo Häyhä was wounded on March 6, 1940, in the forests of Ulismaa in the Kollaa region. He was hit by an explosive bullet shot by a Russian infantry soldier. Simo lapsed into a coma and would not awake until one week later, on March 13, by which time the armistice had already been signed.

Despite the heavy losses it had suffered during the war, Infantry Regiment 34 was given orders on March 6 to counterattack and halt the Red Army's 128th Division, which was attempting to penetrate the Kollaa defenses by advancing through the forests of Ulismaa. The Finnish artillery had no shells left, leaving the Finnish infantry to stop the Russian advance without indirect fire support.

The enemy had decided to break through the Finnish lines regardless of the cost. In an interview, Simo wondered how the Russians kept on resurfacing even when the Finnish attackers shot the majority of them, if not all by their fierce fire. He wondered if the reason was the patriotic propaganda speeches of the *politruks* (political commissars), or whether it was their tanks, which would have machine gunned anyone who had turned around. It was rumored that the enemy had forced their troops to perform, even by threatening them with their own tanks if they refused or turned around.

Because the situation was grave, Simo Häyhä was given a squad of his own. This was no time for the sniper as the battle was so fierce; the enemy depending on its sheer numbers to break through the Finnish forces. Simo recalled killing some 40 Russians before the pressure of the battle became overwhelming and the enemy started to break through the Finnish lines. At this stage of the battle, Simo Häyhä was hit in the jaw by an explosive bullet. Simo described it in a letter he wrote to a friend: "I only heard a suppressing sound, and I knew immediately that I was hit and I started to get this bright tunnel vision that went closer and further, back and forth."

Simo recalls the event as follows:

Then there was March 6, 1940. I was in the dark forests of Ulismaa. We were once more given a mission to counterattack, one of many. We moved to our starting positions in early dawn, about 5 or 6 in the morning. There was a swamp, some 300 meters wide, which we managed to cross without difficulty as our own machine guns gave protection. Once over the swamp, we charged against the enemy that was really close to us. My rifle functioned very well; we were so close to the enemy that they were sometimes even only some two meters from me. The enemy was forced to withdraw, but some individual brave soldiers remained behind to cause havoc among us. Suddenly there was a shot, from maybe 50–100 meters away and I felt I was hit. I just felt a suppressed bang in my mouth and I lost consciousness. After some time I woke up as one of our boys was turning me around by my arm, twisting me into a better position to give me first aid. I felt how my mouth was full of bone fragments and blood; the bullet had entered through the upper lip and punctured my left cheek. The boys were yelling to the medics to get me and I remember how I started my journey to the rear of the lines in a man-towed Lapp sledge. I managed to stay conscious for maybe 300 meters before I blacked out. And from that coma I did not wake up until March 13, the day of the armistice, when I found myself in a military hospital, a week after the battle. I think I was in such a bad shape that they really did not believe they could rebuild this man, but here I am, after all.

Pastor Rantamaa describes Häyhä's wounding in his book:

His remarkable battle career ended at 14:00 hours on March 6 in the heavy battles of Ulismaa after making a new personal record which was 40 Russians killed. Even this was not enough as there were hordes of Russians coming from all directions and it was simply impossible to fight them all off with a bolt-action rifle and one of them got within 20 meters or so and shot him through the upper jaw with an explosive bullet. The whole left part of the upper jaw was blown away, the same happened to the lower left jaw which the bullet tore into two pieces. It seemed to be the end of

the story, so thought his comrades as they settled him on his back in the Lapp sledge for evacuation. It seemed even more like an instant death as Simo had by instinct turned on his stomach face down to the ground as if he wanted to die in the position where he had so remarkably ended the lives of so many enemies before. Now it was the end of his life, thought his comrades as they looked with sad eyes when he was evacuated—to the grave as they thought. In a man-pulled Lapp sledge they took him away.

At some point during the battle, Häyhä was actually declared dead. This account is from one of his relatives, Ensio Friari:

I never told this to Simo, and you are not allowed to tell him either: When Simo was wounded during the Russian charge on Finnish positions, he was taken away and placed on the pile of those killed in action. Simo Häyhä's squad leader, Uuno Varis, started to wonder where he was and asked around. Nobody seemed to know and could not answer. The squad leader said "We won't leave until we find him!" They started an intensive search and when the squad leader went closer to the pile of bodies he saw a boot making a barely noticeable movement beneath the pile. He moved some of the bodies away and found the wounded Simo under the pile.

It should be noted that there is another version of the story where it was a member of the women's auxiliary services who noticed the movement of the boot within the pile of bodies.

Another story tells how Varis asked some men to help him carry Simo away from the pile when he found Simo to be still alive. Simo was then transferred to a local aid post for first aid and from there he was transferred further. When he was taken away the squad leader demanded: "Make sure that Simo is taken quickly to the hospital and that he gets the best possible treatment!"

There is also a story telling how Simo's cousin, Toivo Häyhä, who fought in the same battles, saw Simo being wounded by the enemy bullet. According to this version of the story, he was the person who had demanded that Simo be helped [although some thought he was dead by then] and sent to the local medical aid post for first aid. "Simo's face looked really bad, I tried to bind it as well I could," Toivo said of his involvement in the event.

Simo Häyhä crawled into the Lapp sledge—or as another account states, he was carried there. He was taken to the medics and the journey to the rear could start. The first night he slept next to the dead and only during the following day was he taken to a warm tent.

As you can see, there are many stories and witness accounts of Simo's wounding. It is not really important which one is true, it is more important that Simo and many other wounded Finnish soldiers were brought to safety from the battlefield. He reached the medics just in time to receive life-saving first aid. The worst bleeding was reduced, although they could not entirely stop it. The medics used lots of bandage and cotton wool in the process. Simo Häyhä's sniper's rifle was left on the battlefield in Ulismaa and no effort was made to salvage it. The priority was taking Simo to safety as the pressure from the enemy was hard, the lines were broken and the Finnish troops were in disarray. The chaos was incredible.

Simo was transported by a Lapp sledge and various vehicles along the pre-planned evacuation route. Finally, he was admitted to a hospital in central Finland to receive surgical treatment. Due to his wounds, the evacuation was not a simple operation. According to Simo, he was taken to the Kinkomaa hospital which is in central Finland near Jyväskylä. At that time it had been transformed into a military hospital and the doctors best at treating war-related wounds had been concentrated there. Helsinki was too risky a location for a hospital as the whole city was one big target on the enemy's list.

People thought that Simo was dead. That, however, was not the case. The iconic hero of the Winter War, and particularly of Kollaa, was still alive. When those responsible for awarding decorations were finally convinced that Simo was alive, he was immediately awarded the Kollaa Cross. Simo received a very distinguished guest to the Kinkomaa hospital, the honorary judge and Member of Parliament Toivo Horelli who personally delivered the Kollaa Cross No. 4 to Simo in June 1940.

Simo's recovery begins

After undergoing a number of complex surgical operations in the Kinkomaa Hospital, Simo was transferred to

Helsinki which, following the end of the Winter War, was no longer under danger of Soviet air attack. Here he received further treatment at the Mehiläinen Hospital and would spend some of his recovery period at the Munkkiniemi Nursing School.

The explosive bullet that caused Simo's wound was forbidden under the St. Petersburg Declaration of 1868. Though one may certainly argue, on the basis of on Stalin's murderous reputation, that he would have cared little for what was written in a treaty, it is more likely that the actual decision to use exploding bullets was made by a Russian commander who wanted to maximize the firepower of his assault troops by providing them with the most effective ammunition against soft targets—which, in this case, were explosive bullets.



The harsh and cold winter gave way to a warm and sunny spring in 1940. Simo is second from left. It is not known who the other wounded soldier or nurses are. The nurses took care of Simo and he got to know them. The nurses were highly professional and worked hard, which contributed to their patients' progress. Simo seems ok in this picture, but the broken bones in the jaw required several more operations. Simo also became friends with many of the other wounded soldiers.



Simo Häyhä was treated in the Kinkomaa Hospital, near Jyväskylä, in central Finland. The bullet that hit Simo was against the St. Petersburg Declaration of 1868. The bullet tore off pieces of his cheekbone and exploded in his mouth. The wounds were very severe and Simo was left in tremendous pain and near death. He lost numerous teeth and part of his jaw bone. Simo's jaw had to be reconstructed and rebuilt using bone taken from his hip bone, about 10 centimeters. Simo was unable to speak or eat for three to four months. He could only drink fluids and soups until dentures were made for him. In total he had to go through 26 surgical operations. He was demobbed in May 1941.

In his interviews, Simo always pointed out the importance of good physical strength. I did not doubt this for a moment as, says the old proverb, “a sound mind in a sound body.” There is no doubt that had Simo not been in top-notch physical condition he could not have accomplished what he did nor would he have been able to recover from his serious wounds.

One can only wonder how, after eating through a straw for about three months, from March 1940 he was back eating normal solid food with his rebuilt jaw and dental plate. The number of operations to rebuild his jawbone and mend his remaining natural teeth meant that it took him a long time to recover from the effects of the war.

Simo was released from the military hospital to civilian life on May 19, 1941. During a period of 14 months he had undergone as many as 26 surgical operations—on average two each month. Simo did not participate in the Continuation War (as the later part of World War II is known in Finland), instead he carried on his life as a farmer. Even at his home his folks initially thought that he must have been killed as no word was received from him and then he did not return home with the others. But before too long a letter from Simo was received by a relative in Miettälä village, proving that he was alive. Killing Simo Häyhä was not that easy.



The photo is taken in the spring of 1940 at Kinkomaa Hospital, central Finland. Simo is on the left, the wounds are not very visible as they were on the left side of his face.

Life after the Winter War

A peace treaty between Finland and the Soviet Union was signed in Moscow on March 12, 1940. Finland welcomed a return to peace, even though it had had to give up territory along its southern and eastern borders to the Soviet Union as stipulated in the peace treaty. But Finnish intelligence reports soon indicated that the peace would not last long. Many Finns believed that the Soviet Union was only halting its aggressive behavior temporarily, and it would not stop until all of Finland was under its control. Consequently, Finnish political and military leadership concluded that Finland could not risk being caught unprepared once again. On August 18, 1940, Field Marshal Mannerheim was informed that Germany was willing to provide weapons for Finland's defense. As a result, on September 12, 1940, Finland and Germany signed their so-called transit agreement.

Difficult years of recovery, 1940–1942

Simo recovered from his wounds slowly but steadily over the next few years and regained his strength to begin his life anew. What he wanted most was to live in peace and quiet, far away from the memories of violence and war. Accordingly, following the war, he ran a farm and did some forestry work in the village of Utula in the municipality of Ruokolahti. Of course, people knew of his reputation and deeds of courage. But Simo wanted to live a normal life far away from public attention, preferring instead to concentrate on those things he considered most important—such as farming, hunting, fishing and breeding hunting dogs. In his own mind, he felt that after narrowly escaping death he had gained a second chance on life and he wanted to make the most of it.



Simo sits in the middle of the bottom row. The healing was a slow and tiring process and Simo visited many hospitals over the years. It is a miracle that Simo survived such a wound. As his family say, Simo had two lives: one before the war and the other after it.

Recommended for the Mannerheim Cross

During the short interval of peace between the end of the Winter War in March 1940 and the beginning of the Continuation War in June 1941, a proposal was made to award Simo Häyhä the Mannerheim Cross, which is the highest military award in Finland. The problem with this proposal, however, was that the Order of Mannerheim Knights Cross was established after the Winter War, making it seemingly impossible to award it to him. Despite this, Colonel Antero Svensson suggested in February 1940 that Simo be awarded the Mannerheim Cross for the following, most appropriate reason: "The famous sniper who destroyed with rifle and submachine gun fire almost a battalion of enemies during the Winter War. He got seriously wounded in his face during the last day of the war."

As you may have noticed, there was a slight mistake in the text. Simo Häyhä was wounded on March 6, 1940, which was not the last day of the Winter War. Nonetheless, the dates were quite irrelevant. His accomplishments spoke for themselves, regardless of when or where they happened to take place.

Journey to Denmark

During the spring of 1941 Simo Häyhä and 21 other war veterans from Finland traveled to Syndehaven, Denmark. There, they staying in a holiday resort owned by the International Organization of Disabled First World War Veterans and Simo had the opportunity to meet other heroes. The organization had its own newspaper as well, *Krigs-Invaliden*, which dedicated one edition to the Finns. Simo Häyhä's picture was placed next to a poem dedicated to the heroes of the Winter War. Simo described the trip as a pleasant "one that makes you fat." "Now I've seen Denmark," he noted afterwards.



Simo Häyhä was a member of the Brotherhood of Kollaa Fighters, which cherished the memory of the battles in Kollaa. He was one of the active members on the executive committee, which involved visiting different places and events. He was invited to attend a convention, of disabled veterans from many countries, in Syndehaven, Denmark which was organized by an international organization for disabled veterans. The total number of members of this organization was 2.5 million. Simo was noted by the host and there was an article of him in the publication *Krigs-Invaliden (Disabled Veteran)*.

Krigs-Invaliden



Medlemsblad

for Foreningen for sønderjydske Krigsbeskadede og Faldnes Efterladte

Nr. 11



Den 1. Februar 1941



17. Udgang

De finske Krigsinvaliders Ankomst til Danmark.

Med 24 Timers Forsinkelse paa Grund af Isvanskeligheder i den botniske Bugt ankom de 20 finske Kammerater Søndag, den 26. Januar om Formiddagen via Helsingborg til Helsingør. Den finske

Konsul i Helsingør, Hr. *Vilhelm Lund* var rejst dem i Møde til Helsingborg og trakterede dem paa Færge med Kaffe og Wienerbrød. I Helsingør ventede Ekspeditionssekretær *Salicath* og vor Formand, Kam.



Fra de finske Kammeraters Ankomst foran Hovedbanegaarden i København.

Til højre den finske Gesandt, Minister **Pajula**, Grosserer **Røper-Petersen**.
I Midten de finske Kammerater, med Blomsterne, Kam. **Østermann** ved Siden af Ø. Kam. **Kilpinen**,
Gruppens Fører, til venstre Ekspeditionssekretær **Salicath** og Kam. **Andresen**.
Den 3. fra venstre Kam. **Häyhä**.

The front page of *Krigs-Invaliden* in February 1941, right after the visit of the disabled veterans to Denmark. Simo Häyhä is mentioned in various places in the publication.

The Continuation War and veterans' activity

Simo tried to volunteer for the Continuation War but he was not successful. His wounds were too serious to enable him to join the army again. Instead he was placed on the Horse Call-Up Board where he did valuable work choosing suitable horses and even vehicles for military use. Martti Toiviainen remembers:

After the Winter War Simo was a member of the Horse Call-Up Board. He had a good knowledge of horses. The board visited farms, inspected the horses and confiscated the most suitable horses, carts and sledges for military service. Our farm lost a horse as well and we were paid 4,000 marks in compensation for it being taken for war use. When a horse and vehicle or such was sequestrated it had to be equipped with a shovel and iron bar tool as well.

In addition to farming and horse call-ups, Simo participated in activities of various organizations. He was a member of the Brotherhood of Kollaa Fighters (KTV), which was founded by soldiers who had fought in that area. The organization brought them together and they were the caretakers of the memory and heritage of those battles.

The initial decision to found an organization to maintain the brotherhood of arms and friendship was made on April 8, 1940 in the village of Lehmo, near Joensuu (a city in north Karelia), at which time the 6th Company of Infantry Regiment 34 was being demobilized. The concept of the Kollaa Cross was first discussed at the same time. Design work was entrusted to Second Lieutenant Maunu Siitonen, journalist Erkki Palolampi and military chaplain Antti Rantamaa. From then on almost 8,000 crosses were prepared.

The inaugural meeting of KTV was held on May 5, 1940 in the field of Mutala which belongs today to the city of Joensuu. The existence of the organization provided support for the Kollaa Cross project.

The first annual meeting was held on March 30, 1941. Simo was a board member of KTV and an active participant in running the organization's affairs and decision making. He wanted to make a difference and set an example within the organization just as he had set an example in the Winter War.



Some members of the Brotherhood of Kollaa Fighters were able to participate in the trip to the old battlefield in the Kollaa region. On this trip Simo visited his birthplace. The area near the farm had changed a lot. Russians had built a bunker in the front of his birthplace and moved other buildings to different places. According the story, Simo slept one night in his birthplace

and after that he went back to his new home.



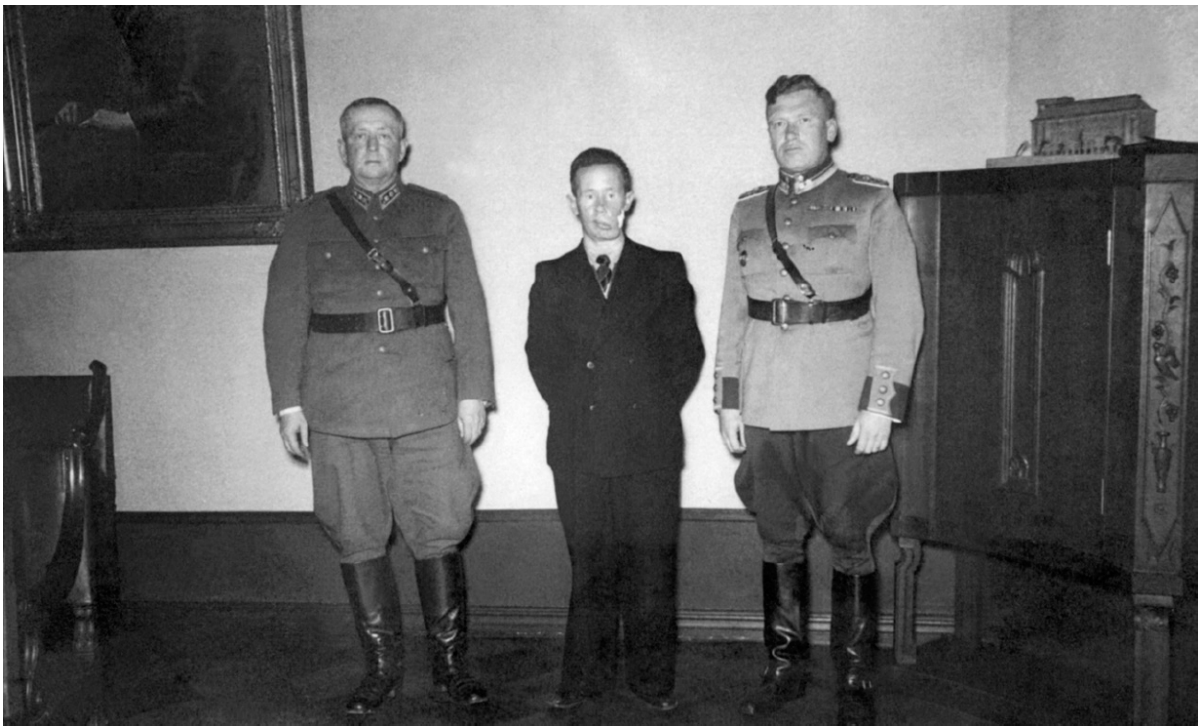
The Brotherhood of Kollaa Fighters' first meeting, in Helsinki on March 30, 1941. The persons sitting at the table are, from the bottom row left to right: Pastor Kerttunen, Pastor Rantamaa, Second Lieutenant Simo Häyhä, Colonel Tiainen, Lieutenant Palolampi and Captain Leino. At the end of the table sits Colonel Svensson and right next to him Pastor Heiskanen.



The executive committee of the Brotherhood of Kollaa Fighters. Second Lieutenant Simo Häyhä is sitting third from the left, right next to him are Colonels Tiainen and Svensson.



A meeting of the Kollaa Fighters Brotherhood held in the city of Helsinki in 1942. Before the Continuation War the members were in close contact. The war caused many kinds of interruption to normal life, meaning that meetings were not that common.



From left to right: Colonel Tiainen, Second Lieutenant Simo Häyhä and Colonel Svensson, who participated in a meeting held in the cooperative Elanto premises. Once Simo was a member of the Brotherhood of Kollaa Fighters, he was able to meet interesting people and have an influence on important matters. This photo was taken in 1941.



Simo Häyhä visiting the Finnish Parliament as a member of the Brotherhood of Kollaa Fighters. Simo is seen on the left side of the photo, standing right next to Colonel Svensson. These friendships were useful for the oncoming war. The photo was taken in 1941.

During the Continuation War, at least for a few years, Finland once again regained the territory and borders it had lost to Russia after the Winter War. During this short period of time, the Finnish Forest Administration decided to preserve the land that had been fought over during the Winter War for future generations. The intention was to leave this land untouched and raise money to construct memorials and statues to honor the Finnish soldiers who had paid the ultimate sacrifice to defend their homeland. Accordingly, it was fitting that the Forest Administration gave KTV an opportunity to express their opinion on which areas should be preserved. Those selected to visit the sites along the Kollaa River included Captains Leino (JR 69) and Laulajainen (III/JR 35), Lieutenant and Judge Aimo Puolanne (5/JR 34), Sergeant and farmer Lauri Rytkönen (Mortar Coy/JR 35), military chaplain Rantamaa and Second Lieutenant and farmer Simo Häyhä (6/JR 34). The Forest Administration was represented by Forest Officer A. J. Valkama and Rangers Arttur Bockström and Harald Borg. The boundaries of those areas identified for preservation were clearly delineated and the battlefield sites photographed. On July 1, 1942, Major General A. Svensson studied the plan and approved it. Following this, the selected areas were then captured on film.



Forestry officer (captain in the reserve) A. J. Valkama making proposals for the borders preservation area. There were some areas that nature conservationists wanted to protect as sanctuaries. A forester named Arttur Bockström, Simo Häyhä and Lauri Rytönen are listening to the proposal. The ground they are standing on was at that time Russian territory. Simo had been used to seeing enemies through his sights in that sector. Many of those enemy soldiers had found eternal peace in this area.

Continuation War, 1941–1944

The peace after Winter War did not last for long and soon Finland was forced to fight new campaigns from 1941 until 1944. After that the Lapland War took place and involved chasing Germans away from northern Finland. After the end of World War II came the era of war reparations and constant alert to what was going on in the east. The war continued on another level, as Finland had to be humble in front of its former enemy, and current friend, the Soviet Union.

Those “politically active” (communists and others with extreme leftist views) who had evaded the war now climbed out of their holes and hiding places and took their place living alongside the veterans, usually questioning the value of their sacrifice. These “heroes of work” were constantly looking for a chance to provide information for

Soviet spies and the Allied Control Commission which resided in Finland after the war. The purpose of this commission was to monitor and make sure that Finns were acting as they were supposed to. The commission reported to the Communist Party and Stalin. The war veterans did not receive the respect they deserved from their own government and even at home they had to be careful about who they should trust and be on the alert for the domestic fifth column.

During the Continuation War, Simo worked on his farm. The Häyhä family was originally evacuated to Lahdenkylä village in Rautjärvi, from where they moved further on to Juva. When the front lines moved back eastward towards Lake Ladoga, it was possible to go home again. To begin with, the men worked at home and when the front lines stabilized the rest of the family were able to move back again. Juho's daughter Sanni married Ensio Friari. They settled down on the farm and took care of farming, together with an elderly couple who stayed on the farm, as was the custom in those days.



Simo Häyhä is second from the left in this photo taken between 1942 and 1950. Hunting and fishing were much-loved hobbies of Simo's both before and after the war. He enjoying being in close contact with nature. Simo made a trip to the famous Salmon River Teno in Lapland. He enjoyed his life after the wars.

The taciturn man of Utula, 1946–1960

Simo Häyhä settled on his brother Juho's farm in Utula. He helped his brother in running the farm and had a room of his own there until the late 1950s. Economically the times were the worst in Finnish nation's history so far; huge war reparations had to be paid; Hanko was rented to the Russians for thirty years for use as a naval base; politicians dealt with their own trusted "household Russkies"; the security police, Valpo, was staffed with communists and carried out all kinds of investigations, real and imaginary, and spying on citizens. The Russians had not managed to

occupy Finland but the years after the war were marked with a strong attempt to obtain the same result by different means and there was an atmosphere of fear. People did not want to speak about the war for fear of being overheard by Soviet spies. Why ask for trouble and risk your own future? Taking into account the atmosphere of those times it is no wonder that Simo wanted to keep a low profile. After all he was the man who had single-handedly silenced almost a battalion of the Red Army. Most of them lay in eternal rest beneath the battlegrounds of Kollaa but Simo lived on, recovering from his wounds and busy with his favorite trade: farming and related forestry. His hobbies were still hunting, skiing and shooting. Simo participated in the maintenance and everyday work of the Utula farm and did some other logging as well. His slow recovery continued, he still needed several kinds of treatment and medication.



Four soldiers, all with the rank of second lieutenant. From left to right, the chief of local Civil Guard District Erkki Roiha, teacher H. A. Jolula, sawmill owner Emil Lankinen, and sniper Simo Häyhä. All of them were from the village of Mietttilä, located in the Rautjärvi municipality, near the Russian border. Emil Lankinen was released from service for he had already lost two of his brothers in the Winter War. After that he lost two more brothers in the oncoming Continuation War. This photo is taken just before the Continuation War, during mid-summer in Ingria, which is an area on Russian soil near Leningrad. Ingria is a large area of 15,000 square kilometers situated on both sides of the river Neva. (By courtesy of Aarre Häyhä)



Simo Häyhä on his farm in Valkjärvi, Ruokolahti Municipality. Simo had built all the farm buildings he needed. He took care of the animals, undertook forestry work and he cooked all his own food. Farming was extremely hard and time-consuming work, especially when working everything alone. Simo had at least one horse to help him. Horses were needed all the year round. In winter time they were used in the forests in lumbering, during the summer they were used in the fields. Simo Häyhä had very little time for hobbies. But all the time he had he spent hunting, his favorite hobby. Crows did not caw long near his farm, the bullet took care of them. Simo was experienced in preserving game.

My mother, who lived in Rautionkylä village, near the town of Imatra, remembered Simo:

I remember seeing Simo bicycling quite often. Our family lived then in Rautionkylä village and ran a small kiosk near our home. Simo often stopped by and bought something at our kiosk. I don't recall what his usual purchases were but he visited us at least once a week. We did not speak much as we didn't know each other.

I also remember Simo very well from the really bad scar on the left side of his head. His left cheek was unnaturally large, blue and swollen. We had many clients who had war scars but nobody with scars that bad. The left side of his face was really swollen. He was a nice customer, however he did not talk much and when he did, it was hard to understand what he was saying.



Simo Häyhä celebrating his 60th birthday in Utula village, Ruokolahti Municipality, enjoying a visit from some members of the Ruokolahti Hunting Association. In the centre is the artist Pätilä, and to the right is police officer Teräväinen. The men were discussing moose hunting and hunting in general.

On his farm, 1961–1970

The municipality of Rautjärvi was bisected by the new Finnish-Soviet border with Simo's home on the "wrong" side. Simo could have remained as a refugee in his native municipality where he still owned some forest land. He was given some land by the Finnish government in the village of Utula in the neighboring Ruokolahti municipality as compensation for the farm that was lost to Russia. This was normal practice, there was special legislation for the purpose of providing new homesteads in post-war Finland for farmers from the part of Karelia ceded to the Soviet Union. The number of refugees totaled 430,000. The rich landowners had to give some of their land to the Karelian refugees, but the new, small patches of land provided did not always guarantee satisfactory earnings for the newcomers. Making a living required lots of hard work.

After Simo's initial recovery he started to cultivate his farm and do his forest work. He did all the work himself and never married. He grew enough grain for his own use and for sale, hay for his horse and took care of the forest in two parishes. Forest harvesting and other timber work was really tough at that time as it was all manual work, hardly any machinery was used, except a chainsaw, which he got much later. The work took its toll on him.

Simo had recovered from his wartime wounds, if one can ever really recover from being hit in the face by an explosive bullet. Simo Häyhä moved to Valkjärvi, another village of Ruokolahti, to have a farm of his own. He built the necessary farm buildings in the 1960s and started to cultivate the new home farm and harvest its forests. After the war Simo was awarded a small forest lot in Syyspohja, also located in Ruokolahti, where he built some auxiliary buildings. He had about 4 hectares of fields, which was enough to grow hay for his horse, which it needed in order to do the heavy logging.

Raimo Partinen reflects:

Simo lived in Syyspohja, Valkjärvi on his own farm, which was located in the municipality of Ruokolahti. His farm was approximately 50 hectares (around 80 acres), of which he cultivated 4 hectares. He also did forest harvesting. Whenever possible, Simo also enjoyed hunting and fishing. As a bachelor, he was quite a good cook, having learned this skill at an early age, and took very good care of himself. Throughout this region, Simo's reputation was that of a nice person who got along with everyone. Even though he remained silent and modest, it did not mean he tried to avoid other people. On the contrary, he was always willing to help others and share information. All that was needed was for someone to simply ask him for assistance or advice and he would help that person out if he could.

Trapping and hunting

Whenever Simo was not working, he turned his attention to a hobby in which he was a top expert—breeding top-quality hounds for hunting. In addition, he also enjoyed hunting moose and reducing the population of those small animals he felt were harmful to nature such as crows, magpies, and foxes. Following the war, Simo used his honorary rifle quite frequently to hunt moose. During the war, this animal was either shot for food or just vanished from certain areas due to the uninhabitable environment. It was not until the 1960s that this beautiful creature would finally return to Ruokolahti. Simo shot a total of 73 moose; the last one in 1984 in the deep forests of Syyspohja. Simo remarked one day that the best moose-hunting dog he ever had was his trusted Kille, who assisted Simo in his shooting of 72 of these splendid animals.

During the moose hunting season, even the President of the Republic Urho Kekkonen visited Simo. This took place when Kekkonen participated in a moose hunt on the island of Äitsaari in the late 1960s. The hunting dog he used was of course raised and trained by Simo. This well-trained dog was able to get male moose on the move straight towards Kekkonen's position and firing line. Kekkonen took a good aim and bagged the moose. He was happy with his bull's-eye hit.

Simo regarded foxes as being among the smartest animals in the forest, but he proved to be a master in hunting them down. By his own account, he would trap foxes and then use his gun to administer a "mercy" shot. Hunting foxes requires a specific skill set. Trapping includes covering one's own scent; for this purpose, Simo developed a mixture of his own, a thick ooze-like substance that contained, among other ingredients, rotten eggs. The smell covered not only his scent, but attracted foxes in its own peculiar way. Through his efficient and successful hunting skills, Simo reduced the large population of foxes in his local area, which gave many other species a better chance of breeding. During his best season, Simo trapped or hunted as many as 28 foxes, which is more than an average hunter generally bags in a lifetime.



Simo with his best friend, Kille, a Finnish Spitz, a perfect dog for hunting. Kille was the most talented of Simo's dogs, and barked at anything from squirrel to moose. Kille was used for bird hunting; Simo couldn't remember how many birds had been shot with Kille's help, there had been too many. This photo was taken between 1960 and 1970.

A logging accident

Many years ago Simo had bought more forest land in Mietttilä village. People talked about "Simo's forest." He did harvesting in that region as well. It was quite a considerable distance from Syyspohja to Mietttilä and Simo travelled the distance usually by bus since few people owned cars or had the use of a car at this time. The bus ride from Syyspohja to Mietttilä took more than an hour each way. The days in forest harvesting were long and exhausted his strength.

Simo's injuries bothered him increasingly as the years passed. The effect was not that considerable on his everyday life, but they reminded him of their existence now and then. The long days on the farm and in forest also

tired him out. He worked as a farmer until an accident while logging forced him to quit. One day, when he was harvesting timber, he found a hung tree, which he started cutting with a chainsaw. The hung tree was under such tension that once it broke, it hit Simo in the hip, wounding him so severely that he couldn't carry on working as a logger. It was time to retire and enjoy his well-earned retirement years.

To the shores of Lake Saimaa, Rasila, 1970–2001

In the 1970s Simo bought a studio apartment in Rasila, in the town center of Ruokolahti. The view from his home on the top floor of the high-riser was breathtaking. When I was admiring the view for the first time in 1997, Simo stood leaning on his walking sticks in the front of the window facing Lake Saimaa and said: “For this view I bought this.”

This short sentence explains it all. The view of Lake Saimaa is beautiful and relaxing, indeed. It is one of the many sites that make up Finland's beautiful homeland, which Simo Häyhä and comrades fought, and many of them died, to preserve for themselves and future generations. I spent many summers in the 1980s on a farm belonging to Raimo Partinen in the village of Kärinki, Ruokolahti. Simo visited the farm quite often, he continued to shoot until the 1990s, mostly with an air rifle. Simo always took good care of his physical condition by walking—with or without sticks—and he also wanted to keep up his shooting skills to a certain level.



Simo Häyhä and Finnish hound Maikki photographed on Raimo Partinen's porch. Simo was particularly fond of hunting dogs. He was famous for his skills in breeding hunting dogs. He seemed to understand the dogs and their behavior. It seemed to me that he knew how dogs think. Maikki was the most famous of the dogs Raimo Partinen ever had. At least 100 rabbits were shot with the help of this dog.

I was practicing my shooting skills during this period, often at the Partinen farm. Raimo had a very suitable and safe place for shooting, over the fields and towards rocky hills. Simo sometimes visited us, watching what we were doing. He just watched at us shooting for some time, silently. Knowing who he was I wondered if I was doing something wrong as he never said a word. I had my own way of practicing. We never checked the targets together, he was a guest of the owner, I was just a passer by.

In the early 1990s when he was still in fairly good shape, Simo used to drive around quite a bit from one place to another. His car was a yellow Beetle, a trustworthy vehicle that took him reliably where he wanted to go. He visited, among other places, the old Salpa Line fortifications in Syyspohja as well as the site of a POW camp that

was there during the war. With Raimo Partinen he once also checked out a bear's den in the Ruokolahti forests.



The picture was taken in on June 24, 1990 when Simo was visiting Raimo Partinen's farm in Ruokolahti. Simo was a most welcome guest and he, and his yellow Volkswagen Beetle, were often seen on the farm premises. During that time I was doing a lot of target shooting on that farm. While I and Matti, Raimo Partinen's son, were practicing target shooting, Simo often came to watch. He never commented. I felt silly, wondering what I was doing wrong, but I never found out what that was, I never even asked, being a typical shy Finn.

The Salpa Line was a heavy fortification system built to stop the Russians. It was built in 1941–1944 and it still is the greatest construction system ever built in Finland. Some hundred thousand workers, both men and women worked to build it. The Salpa Line consists of hundreds of bunkers, hundreds of kilometers of trenches, lots of natural and man-made caves. It spans several hundreds of kilometers from the Gulf of Finland to Salla. It was the genius idea of Commander-in-Chief Mannerheim to stop and slow the Russian invasion, if it was to happen. It was the last defense, but the Russians never got that far into the country.

Observing the world around us

In the late 1990s, during my interviews of Simo, we discussed current affairs and world politics. This time he was the one asking questions and I was the one wondering how to answer. I could only admire the sharpness of his mind. He obviously kept a close watch on what was going on through the newspapers and the television. I don't recall which papers he subscribed to but I'm quite sure that the leading regional paper, *Etelä-Saimaa* was one of them.

Simo asked me about my opinions on Afghanistan, Chechnya, and Kosovo. He was interested in my opinions and views on conflicts fought in those regions, noting that the common participant in all of those conflicts was always Russia; though the Soviet Union had collapsed on December 21, 1991, Russia was still attempting to keep its former allies and satellite states under its control in order to prevent them falling into the laps of Western powers. The struggle for interests and spheres of interest was closely followed also in Rasila. This former Winter War sniper and today's happy pensioner kept a sharp eye and mind on world affairs. One can only admire his determination.



The best sniper of all time on the left, the author on the right, on April 10, 1997. This interview, like our other interviews, were recorded on videotape or digitally so that I could later check Simo's answers to my questions. It was a hard task sometimes to understand Simo's speech, due to the damage done by that exploding bullet. (Ville Hautamäki)

Before long, our discussion switched over to the affairs of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Simo pointed out for me time after time that had we failed in the Winter War or the wars that followed, Finland would have suffered the same fate, that of Soviet occupation. Simo always pointed out that Finland was never occupied; the Russians never got a firm grip of us. We narrowly escaped the fate of the former Soviet satellite states. The current generation owes a great deal of gratitude to the veterans of the Winter War and the other wars. Finland should also not forget the skilled statesmen who negotiated the peace, particularly at the end of the Winter War. The peace treaty came literally at the last hour. Had it not taken effect on March 13, 1940, it might not have materialized at all. Everything was on a knife edge; all the Finnish resources were exhausted by the end of the war. "We would not have lasted much longer," said Simo, and he knew what he was talking about. He witnessed the fury of the Russian assaults with his own eyes, when they were trying to capture Finland and Finnish freedom. The sheer quantity of enemy manpower was enormous, and Russia steadily poured more troops into the front all the time. Finland, on the other hand, had sustained heavy losses which it could not replace. All its reserves were spent.

We discussed events like this when I visited Simo in his home several times between 1997 and 2001. Though he lived alone, he seemed happy and content with this life. Ruokolahti Municipality had arranged a nurse to visit him from time to time to take care of his medication and general health. Simo also had a trusted taxi driver, who took care of his daily visits and took Simo where he needed to go, would wait for him until his business was finished and then take him home, and help Simo back up to his top-floor apartment. An elderly lady who was his neighbor also assisted him. She often made coffee and something light to eat when I was visiting Simo.

Friends and relatives also visited Simo occasionally and helped him out when they could. As his relatives and friends were generally of the same generation, they shared a common bond and were not bothersome to him. Most of his relatives lived further away, so the frequency of their visits were limited by distance.

Kymi Institute for Disabled Veterans, 2001–2002

Due to his advanced years, Simo's health started to deteriorate significantly in 1999. Cataracts in both his eyes, which had been diagnosed some time earlier, started to increasingly bother him and his nurse needed to visit more frequently. Simo underwent a successful operation, however, shortly after, due to budgetary constraints, the Ruokolahti Municipality decided that, in order to save money spent on veterans, it was no longer willing to pay for a home nurse.

Accordingly, Simo had to leave his home. He was given two options—to move into a Ruokolahti Municipality home for senior citizens (or another assisted living community), or move in with relatives. Though he was not enthusiastic about this idea, Simo understood he could not manage on his own any more and had to move somewhere where proper care could be arranged. He decided upon the Kymi Institute for Disabled Veterans, which was located at Kokkokatu 2 in the city of Hamina. It was obviously the best option available to him since there were many other veterans living there and Simo would most likely find the new environment enjoyable. On May 5, 2001, I met Simo at his house for the last time. Afterwards, I would visit him many times at the Hamina institute.

The institute was Simo's home for the final year of his life, as it was for countless other Finnish veterans who came before him, and will be for those in the future. The decision to create such a place for the veterans of Finland's wars was well conceived. The institute is located in the peaceful location at Kokkokallio, with staff renowned for their excellent attitude and skill.



Simo Häyhä at the Kymi Institute for Disabled War Veterans in Hamina. Living there gave Simo the opportunity to meet the other war veterans and share his time and experiences with them. It was noted that the matters of war were never discussed. He was taken care of by the nurses. These two tremendously important persons are Ritva Periaho on Simo's left and Kati Lahti on his right hand side. If I recall it correctly, the matter of conversation was something other than the weather—they seem to be having a great time together!

Simo seemed to cheer up remarkably well after spending time with other veterans. In his own words, Simo occasionally conversed with other patients. Yet war was not among the many topics of these discussions. Rather, Simo remarked how these talks centered around current affairs and, of course, the weather. Simo also related how he would visit the nearby market square with nurses and his veteran friends; describing what he saw there and what he discussed with other people. Simo had been living alone for several decades and he was set in his own routine, just like any of us would be. Simo, however, adjusted well to his new community surprisingly quickly. There is little doubt that the warmth, care and skill provided by the nurses helped considerably in his adjustment process. The way they took care of their patients was exemplary.

A soundly sleeping man

During the summer of 2001, Simo seemed to be brisk and in quite mentally alert. On some days he was very tired, while on others he was full of energy. This is a normal phenomenon when getting old. Luckily, my visits seemed to take place at times when he was able to provide concise answers to my questions.

Simo had quite a good sense of humor. Sometimes he joked about his own condition, remarking, for example: “Kollaa held but my hip is giving up.” This was the same hip from which bone had been taken to fix his jaw in the 1940s. And on the Kymi Institute for Disabled Veterans he said: “Now I can really live like a gentleman: everything is taken care of and the nurses are nice. This is better than anything so far.” Sometimes he made short remarks about the war, something like this: “Some guys” when referring to soldiers of both sides.

Simo told me that he never had dreams or nightmares about the war. When asked, he answered like this: “War was never in my dreams. I am a happy and fortunate man. I have always slept well, even during battles on the front, unless there were continuous fire concentrations going on, like in Afghanistan at the moment.”

If there was one thing he repeatedly emphasized during our many interviews over the years, it was the meaning of those wars fought on the Finnish territory and the significance of Finland maintaining its independence. “War is not a pleasant experience,” he said, “but who else would protect this land unless we are willing to do it ourselves.” This was not only a message to me, but one to be conveyed to all the readers of this book. Simo constantly pointed out that this was a harsh time for Finns, both as a nation and as individuals, and the country had to take care of it alone. The Russians who attacked Finland had to be stopped. Accordingly, all of Finland should be grateful to the veterans of all its wars who fought to save their “Fatherland.”

Part II

The Secrets of Simo Häyhä's Success

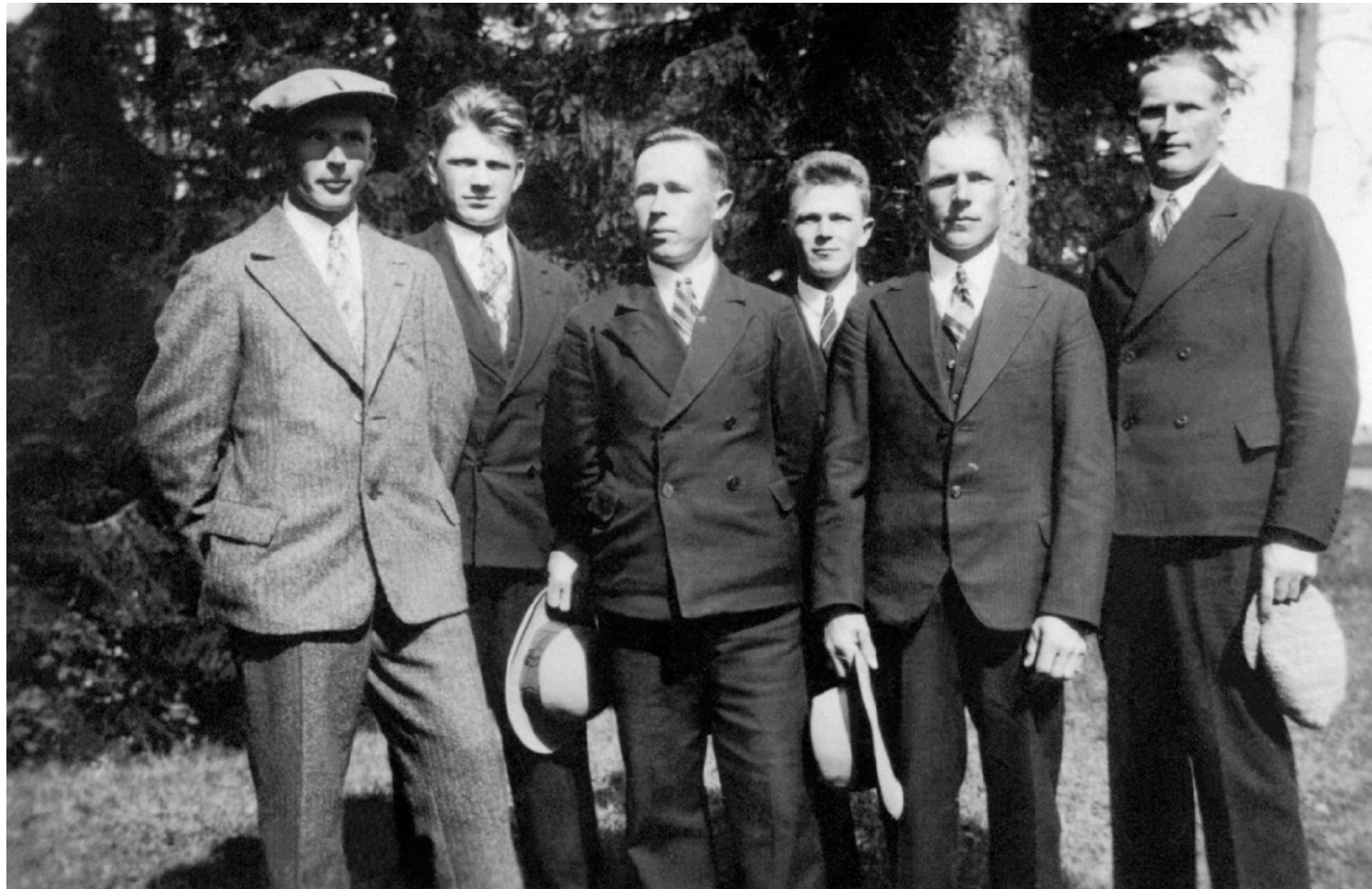
Simo Häyhä was a born soldier and leader, blessed with certain inherent advantages that men such as these all seem to possess—he was independent minded, cool thinking and had steady nerves. Combined with a cautious mind, attentiveness to detail in his preparation for missions, and superior shooting skills, these traits together guaranteed him constant success in combat.

Cold will and experience

Simo Häyhä also had excellent self-discipline and self-control that were supplemented with an uncompromising determination to fulfill his assigned mission with professional devotion. In doing so, he received respect, admiration and support from both his comrades and commanders.

As related in this book, it is not always possible to complete a mission at the first attempt. If Simo was unable to destroy the enemy with his first attempt, he kept trying. He never gave up. He would try different approaches, methods and actions until the work was done. When commanders gave him tasks and missions, they knew he would do his best. In their eyes, if he couldn't take care of the problem, nobody could.

By the beginning of the Winter War, Simo Häyhä was already an experienced marksman and hunter. He knew both his strengths and his own need for further development as well. He understood how things happened and reason and consequence. This logical style of thinking partially enabled his superior performance on the battlefield. Sometimes it seemed as if he could predict—at least to some extent—the intentions and movement of the enemy. This gave him an edge.



The photo taken in the early 1930s; Simo Häyhä is third from the left. In those days Simo was like anyone else, living a normal life. He was working and living in his birthplace, participating in Civil Guard activities and playing Finnish Baseball, like many others at that time. He was very good at this national game and his favorite position to play in was catcher. He was incomparable in that position, thanks to his reflexes.

Simo Häyhä was also patient enough to wait for the right moment. He observed the enemy, learned their behaviors and routine and formed a clear mental picture and the applicable method to operate in different terrains and combat environments. As a sniper, he was so stealthy that sometimes his lengthy and detailed preparations went unobserved by the Russians. They never saw him; thus they had no warning when his carefully aimed bullet left the muzzle of his rifle.

Simo always carried enough ammunition for his missions. His normal load was 50–60 rounds. In addition, he carried several hand grenades, which he referred to as “Ranger’s Sparks.” He believed they would come in handy if the Russians got too close to his position. Though he was smart enough to prepare himself against various threats, it is not known if he ever used his grenades in combat, although I asked him about this many times. One can only assume he did not carry them along solely for their ornamental value.

Simo Häyhä was a silent man. He never made a fuss about himself; almost as if he preferred to give the impression that he was present in the war but in the background. Of course, he witnessed many terrible events, especially behind enemy lines, sights that no one else saw, but most of these thoughts he kept to himself. Only if it involved crucial intelligence would he tell his commanding officer.

After interviewing him over many years, I wish he would have opened up more to certain questions. We all have our reasons not to talk about specific matters and in Simo Häyhä’s case, he followed the simple rule: don’t tell anyone anything more than you have to. And that rule he strictly adhered to at all times—even with me.

Simo Häyhä’s reputation was known on both sides of the front lines. The Russians knew who he was, which created additional pressure on him to succeed on his missions. I once asked him during an interview if he knew that the Russians had put a reward on his head. After pausing for some point, he answered, “I only heard it after I got wounded and was released from the hospital.” I don’t know if that answer was true but it is possible. Personally, I believe he knew about it during the war, though he didn’t want me to know that for whatever reason.

Bravery and self-confidence

Simo Häyhä was confident in his own abilities. He knew his own strengths and weaknesses. He had enough experience as a farmer, shooter and through his other tasks that required good physical condition and nerves to know what he was capable of.

He trusted his physical skills as much as one can. He did not need to boast his abilities to anyone; besides, there was very little to be achieved by such behavior anyway. He was after all, a Karelian, and such behavior is not respected—they let their deeds speak from themselves.

Simo trusted his rifle and his shooting skills. On numerous occasions, he practiced the secrets of precision shooting at the range with live ammunition and at home testing and training in various shooting positions. He bought his rifle with his own money, an M/28-30, made by the SAKO rifle factory. He knew his rifle and knew how to use it.

This same rifle was his personal weapon during the Winter War; a key fact that cannot be underestimated. Knowing one's own rifle is one of the most important details in shooting. Every rifle has its own individual strengths and flaws, even those of the same model differ. The accuracy of the rifle, the trajectory of the bullet, together with the adjustment of sights vary from one rifle to another. For example, when adjusting the sights, one "click" is slightly different for every gun. The gun factories do their best, but guns are all different in their adjustment and accuracy. That was the case in Simo's time and is still the case today. When there is a change of weather conditions, particularly when it gets colder, each gun shows its distinctive features, and these should be known by the shooter.

Simo Häyhä knew himself, his equipment and his subordinates. His squad members were from the same home village. Häyhä trusted them and they trusted him, which proved to be a solid foundation for his successful leadership.

Character and physical condition

As in any war, it is impossible to fully grasp or explain the emotions affecting the Finnish soldier who defended their homeland; factors such as the level of fear that lurked in their minds, their worries about fellow comrades, wife, girlfriend or close relatives.

I tried to ask Simo in various ways whether he was ever scared in the war but cannot recall him ever admitting it. He respected a Russian as a human beings who fought for their own nation and never underestimated the enemy's capabilities to fight the war. They just had a different goal to the Finns. Simo carried out those tasks required of him, concentrating on the mission at hand and putting his personal feelings and emotions in the background.

I did, however, get some answers, when I asked him how he felt about shooting the enemy. When I asked him if he ever felt hatred towards them for attacking his homeland he promptly answered, "No." I was somewhat taken aback by such a response, but Simo explained that he only concentrated on ensuring that his weapon was well supported and stable. As he said, "I always took full sight and I took steady aim at the middle of the target. I felt nothing towards the enemy. I shot and reloaded as long as there were any enemies present."

When I asked if he was selective with his targets, such as looking for officers, he replied, "I shot whenever I saw the enemy. I did not care if he was a leader or not." Simo once told me about a Russian sniper who only shot Finnish officers. "I put an end to it" he said with a humorous tone in his voice. I came to the conclusion that Simo approached his role as a sniper as if he was at shooting range. He did not let his feelings affect him in any way, preferring to concentrate on securing the best possible shooting performance. During these interviews, Simo Häyhä always stressed the importance of good physical condition as well, remarking, "Without really good fitness, it is just impossible to be a sniper!"

Sadly, Simo's wound seems to have altered his life after the war. Once a healthy, physically fit and outgoing soldier, his near death experience, coupled with a lengthy recuperation period in the hospital far away from his comrades at the front and suffering from constant pain even after the multiple surgeries to fix his jaw, more than likely affected his personal life. He never married, and by all accounts from those who knew him, seemed more comfortable simply minding his own business. One such individual I interviewed, Kalevi Ikonen, said that "Simo spoke more with animals in the forest than with other people." Considering, however, that he underwent a total of 26 surgical operations on his jaw, and his speech was never fully restored, it is not difficult to understand why he

may not have wanted to interact with others more than was necessary.

Simo Häyhä had a very modest personality. He never bragged about his wartime accomplishments or about his shooting skills. After the war, Simo returned to his farm in Rasila. His reputation and accomplishments were well known, though he preferred to live an ordinary life alone. He did not have many visitors, though a trusted friend and relative, Ensio Friari, would make occasional visits with his family, and took care of Simo's needs and business-related tasks that he was unable to do himself.

Until he reached an advanced age, Simo was able to take good care of himself while living in his studio apartment in Ruokolahti. The need for assistance increased as he grew older. A nurse visited him periodically to ensure he was fine. He had hardly any other social contact except occasional visits by relatives. He was very careful and reserved about meeting people. Of course by this time, the majority of his friends had already passed away.

Being transferred then to the Institute of Wounded Veterans in Hamina was in many respects a blessing for him. Simo received good medical care at home while living in Ruokolahti, but he had been quite alone without daily interaction with other people. Once at the institute, Simo met people of his own age and enjoyed close interaction with other war veterans. Although many of his fellow veterans were younger, it did not seem to pose any problems for him. In fact, Simo made new friends with whom to discuss daily matters. At that time, there were already days when his condition worsened as age slowly took its toll. Simo's mind remained sharp until the very end. It was uncanny how he was able to remember so many things and occasions from decades past in such rich detail as if they had happened yesterday!



This was the aiming point. I always aimed at the middle of the target with a full sight. Simo is holding the M/28-30, a personal item of the author's collection. He said it was precisely like the weapon he used in the Winter War 1939–1940. In his opinion, modern sniper rifles are far too bulky and heavy for anyone to carry around in battle. According to him, the weapon should not weigh any more than the one in his hand. Any heavier and the soldier loses his ability to move fast.

Aiming

When interviewing Simo, I made every attempt to understand the relationships between cause and effect with a sufficient time perspective. This means, that I tried to figure out what actually happened in every case and in every situation. I also tried to find out what how events panned out on different occasions. My goal was to understand the way he thought and acted. In addition to that I wanted to ask the same things again and again as it was very challenging for me to hear and understand his speech. In other words, over a period of several years I asked the same questions in various different ways. Aiming, was my specific interest, as it is the basis for a good shot.

Simo's weapon was zeroed for the most common combat distance of the time, 150 meters. Simo kept the sights adjusted at 150 meters as it enabled him to rapidly adjust to the proper setting as needed. According to Simo, most of his kills were made on distances ranging between 100 and 150 meters.

Simo always took his aim at the middle of the target. The battlefield is not a shooting range where the target is stationary and you can take your time to aim and start all over again if necessary. You have to maximize the hitting probability, the best way to do this through aiming is to aim in the middle of the target, that's what Simo always did.

The tactical situation in the battlefield can change fast and the time available for a good shot varies. Sometimes the target is exposed for longer, enabling an accurate and well-prepared shot. I asked Simo several times where he took his aim and every time I got the same response: "In the middle of the target."

Simo Häyhä aimed in the middle, fast and accurately. Simo always took a careful sight at the enemy but he wasted no time admiring the target he was aimed at. He shot quickly, knowing that the sharp aim at the target only lasts for a moment. Using too much time resulted in the eye being tired and blurring the field of vision, which naturally would not improve the probability of hitting the target.

I inquired why he did not try to hit a specific part of the target, such as the head. He did not fully understand the rationale of the question so I had to explain that there is a common thought that snipers tend to attempt at headshots on their victims. Simo always shot in the middle of the visible part of the target and today this is called "shooting at the center of the gravity." This method was proven already in wartime so why make things more difficult than they already were? The head is a difficult target; first of all it is the smallest part of body and it is most likely subject to rapid movements, which might result in a miss. I have repeatedly described the method of aiming on purpose. A reader has now a good example of my double-checking the method while interviewing Simo. This example of aiming explains it a bit.

For a moving target one naturally allows for advance and aims at the deflection point. This is what Simo did. Usually he hit even a moving target with the first shot. Naturally he occasionally missed, but almost all misses were shots taken against moving targets. Missing is inevitable for a human. Simo Häyhä was not a terminator robot, he was a real sharpshooter, who usually worked alone and under extreme pressure.

The Civil Guard also trained on the basics of shooting. One of their essential training methods, the so-called "triangle aiming," is still in use. For this method, the weapon is firmly attached onto a table or mount. The shooter aims through the sights towards a wall 3–10 meters away. The instructor moves a target on the wall, according to what the shooter requests. When the shooter thinks his aim is perfect he asks an instructor to fix the target motionless. The center of the target is marked with a pin on the wall which is covered with a piece of paper or cardboard.

This is repeated three times, usually resulting in three dots on the target. Dots are connected creating a triangle. The smaller the triangle, on the paper the better the shooter is repeatedly able to take a steady and correct aim. This method is still in use in the Finnish military. This is the case especially in sniper training. The importance of taking a careful sight is being taught over and over again. If a sniper trainee does not learning to repeat this every time in the same way, he won't become a sniper at all.

Weapon maintenance

My conversations with Simo often touched on the topic of proper gun maintenance. In time of peace Simo always cleaned his gun immediately after daily training was concluded or whenever he thought it was necessary. In his opinion, the most important part was the proper maintenance of barrel, chamber and bolt. First, he cleaned these parts very carefully then applied either gun oil or lamp oil to the barrel and chamber. After that he cleaned the bolt,

disassembled it after each use, used a dry cloth to wipe it clean, inspected all surfaces and left it to dry. He checked the proper operation of the trigger mechanism and cleaned it when necessary. The wooden parts were cleaned with a dry cloth. Finally, he reassembled the gun, dry-fired it and then appropriately stored it.

Simo often pointed out in our discussions the importance of proper gun maintenance. In combat he performed maintenance operations systematically, always before starting a mission and immediately upon completing a mission. He was very disciplined and paid attention to every detail when it came to maintaining his gun. He removed the excess oil from the barrel—the soul of the gun—leaving only a very thin layer as protection against the weather. He typically cleaned the stock and other wooden parts with a cloth several times a day as they could easily become soiled with dirt and snow in those conditions. This was the case especially when the enemy had tried to kill Simo with an antitank gun, infantry gun or by an artillery fire concentration. He camouflaged his gun with white gauze bandage, which from time to time needed inspection and replacement.

After all this it was time to see if the rest of his equipment needed attention, and finally when all this was done, it was time to see if the man himself needed refreshment. When it came to his weapon, he inspected everything; sights, cleanliness of the barrel, bolt and the feeding ramp. I once asked Simo if he ever had jamming on his weapon. He responded “Never. The rifle was very good and reliable.”

Well, behind this statement were his meticulous maintenance and an expert marksman. The rifle model 28-30 was the best and newest of its time. Civil Guard members nationwide had bought them for personal use. As a manufacturer, SAKO was very famous for their production quality—it was the best available at that time.

Field zeroing

The ability to zero one's rifle and check the actual impact in the battlefield is vital. This was something that the Civil Guard taught well. Naturally, the main method of zeroing was to use standard targets on the shooting range. As ranges and pre-set targets are not available in the battlefield, the field methods were practiced during the peacetime training, as it still is today in the Finnish army.

During combat, Simo Häyhä concentrated on destroying the enemy. Whenever there was a lull in the battle he checked the zeroing of his rifle. During the interviews, he often mentioned with a grin how he checked his zeroing by shooting at small snow-covered treetops.

It is very easy to see the impacts when you shoot at the snow-covered dwarf pines and pine-shoots with a slope or a hill at a background. Any misses were visible and hits were easy to detect as either the snow or whole top disappeared. With this method, zeroing was a handy and time-saving maneuver in the battlefield. Sometimes this method was not possible, so he used stumps of a tree located at suitable ranges on the battlefield. The impact of a shot could have been seen as described earlier.

When I asked Simo how often he zeroed his weapon, he remarked: “Always, when I had a reason to do so.” So, this was how a real pro acted on the battlefield. I have a hunch that he did it daily, if needed. He had to be extremely sure that the aiming point and bullet impact met at the same spot whatever the shooting distance. His life depended on it.

Hunting experience

As the son of a farmer, Simo Häyhä also came to love farming and nature. When he hunted, he acted as a visitor in the forest, believing that one could not just enter nature's domain and take something from it. Rather, he felt that you are only entitled to something from nature only if you are willing to be part of it. He was also a thoughtful hunter, only shooting from a distance where he was sure to obtain a kill. He had a healthy respect for animals and their right to live. All in all, he adhered to simple and clear solutions that seemed to work for him under most circumstances.

During the Winter War, his quarry was a thinking, calculating fellow human being, and any miscalculation could cost him his life. Simo was an expert in utilizing sounds, smoke, artillery fire and other factors to cover his movements when changing positions. He was used to crawling in order to get into his hiding place to shoot black grouse. This happened in peacetime also during the hours of dark. The method he deployed in the Winter War was

essentially the same, but with a different target.

Before the war, Simo had learned good hunting skills in Partila. He had experience in hunting moose, beavers, birds, small predators and all harmful beasts. Simo's specialty was hunting foxes, which is known to be one of the hardest game to hunt. Simo shot many foxes and was an expert trapper as well.



Simo Häyhä and the smartest animals of the woods. This photo dates back to 1941 and shows the best bag of the day. Simo's best total for foxes was 28 during one single winter. Simo proved his skills in this hunting form, as the fox is the toughest animal to be hunted.

He had many times hunted birds in forest clearings and pine forests, which were typical locations to find them. These birds were rather timid, reacting to even the slightest sound, reflection or sudden movement. Simo had learned to approach a bird spotted by a dog when it was easiest, such as when the bird concentrated its attention on the barking dog.

A hunter must have sharp vision. He must spot the target and recognize it. After that comes the decision of shooting at the current distance or whether it would be more advantageous to approach it from some other angle. If the hunter chooses the first option, he estimates the distance, takes a firing position, sets his sights and fires. Everything depends on the actual situation, target and terrain. There are no foolproof methods in hunting as each situation and condition is unique.

When a hunter shoots at his target, he must be able to observe the impact. If the bullet hits the target and the game falls it will be found near its last observed position. At least that is how it should happen in theory. In reality, any game will try to escape if the first shot is not lethal, unless the game is injured beyond movement. Any animal will try to defend itself until dead or unable to move. This also applies to humans on the battlefield. This is also the fundamental reason why throughout history the best snipers have been experienced hunters. In sniping there is no fixed doctrine or discipline that would apply throughout the operational environment. It is my opinion, based on actual observations, that those with past experience in hunting will become better-than-average snipers or precision

shooters and that hunting is a solid foundation for training. This is an unwritten rule, not an exception; in the end there are also many other requirements for a sniper than just the skills of a hunter and shooter.

Anticipating the situation is often the decisive factor of success in hunting. Whatever the target or game, its movement and actions will alter the situation assessment. A bird may fly and a target on the ground may change position without advance warning. Planning and then observing the changing situation enhance a hunter's ability to become a successful sniper. Simo Häyhä had trained in these skills with less dangerous targets. Well before his sniper's training, he had been forced to give deep thought to these factors and learn them the hard way, which happens to be the best way as well. It is a long way to go, but as is often said, sweat saves blood on the battlefield.



The President of Finland, Urho Kaleva Kekkonen, and Simo Häyhä moose hunting together in the 1970s. The dog used for hunting was, of course, Simo's own Kille. Kille fulfilled expectations, and used his talent to bark at moose for the President.

The one he shot had a good-sized antler. Kille barked 73 moose during his lifetime. It was a case of like master like dog.



Simo Häyhä when he was serving in the rank of corporal. He glances towards the unknown future. At this time he has no idea of the challenges he would face. Simo had always kept himself in an excellent physical and mental condition. He would need his physical strength in carrying out the tasks given to him in the Winter War. His recovery after being wounded was also facilitated by his extremely good health.

Leadership skills

Simo Häyhä's peacetime training saw him rise to corporal. His leadership skills had been observed during his conscript period and training and in military review exercises. He had no intention or ambition for a military career, so he fulfilled his duty in his own humble way. He never tried to emphasize his leadership skills, those skills were duly noted during his later wartime career.

Leadership is based upon setting an example, skill and knowledge. Within a combat environment this knowledge is often the most up-to-date reconnaissance. Simo always forwarded this information to his commanding officer, helping him to make decisions based on new and detailed information about the enemy and its movements. Operational options are based on this knowledge up to company level. As a leader, Häyhä was able to reconnoiter the enemy by observing its actions and movements. With this information he could lead his own squad during the early stages of the war and earned the respect of his squad members by his modest but highly professional charisma.

The most important part of Simo Häyhä's leadership was his own example. He acted in all combat roles with his men and even alone—one can never stress that too much. He led his squad from the front, leading by his own example. While attacking this is the most important detail. Not all the leaders acted the same way during the war,

some of them led their troops from the rear which did not really increase confidence among the troops and reduced success. Sometimes military leaders trying to lead from the rear don't survive long either.

Not only does a good leader need the ability and will to do things right, they also need the courage to carry out the mission. A person needs determination and executive power to carry out the tasks they are given. Simo Häyhä was a leader. He didn't lack the skills to carry out the tasks given to him. His grade both in sniping and in leadership skills was A++. You just couldn't expect more from anyone. He did his work extraordinarily well, his leadership skills may be one of the reasons that his comrades were so keen to find him when he was wounded. His mates took good care of him. A true spirit of the Winter War was seen on this occasion. You never left your buddy!

“Reading” and using the terrain

Simo was the ultimate master in exploiting the terrain of the battlefield to his advantage. The Winter War broke out when he was 33 years old, and he celebrated his 34th birthday on December 17, 1939, on the Kollaa battlefield. He had the accumulated knowledge and skills of a mature adult, in addition to all his hunting experience.

During the Winter War maps were scarce. Some officers, such as company commanders might have had one; but lower-ranking officers hardly ever had any, nor did the snipers. On the battlefield the essential maps must be carried in one's own head and Simo learned this very fast. He learned his area of operation in detail so he could utilize the terrain to his advantage in the best possible way.

Simo Häyhä was an experienced trekker, just as were many others of his time. His father was an experienced hunter who had taught Simo the basics of using the terrain and finding game. An animal in the forest tries to hide and escape from the hunter only by utilizing the shelter of the terrain in the best possible way.

In the Winter War the target was the most elusive and difficult of all game: men. Soldiers' skill in using the terrain varied but those who couldn't do it ended up in Simo's sights or suffered the losses of war in some other way.

A human knows another human just like any kind knows its kind. This makes it both easier and more difficult to eliminate the intended target. A soldier must maneuver in the battlefield in order to get from his staging area to a firing position and to relocate from one area to another. Mastering the use of terrain and predicting the enemy movement and activity were the essential battlefield skills. Those who could utilize the terrain usually lived longer or survived. A clever combatant thinks he will attempt to destroy the opponent immediately upon detection. A human may also try to escape or at least change positions when feeling threatened—just like wild game changing its hiding place. A soldier is a difficult and dangerous game as he will shoot back immediately upon detecting his opponent.

Fear is one of man's oldest and strongest feelings. Fear has had a great importance in and influence over humans' survival as a species. Fear forces humans to evaluate their options and, often, to withdraw from a situation. A strong surge of adrenalin occurs in the blood when a person feels fear, which will enhance one's capabilities to a certain extent. In combat plenty of this hormone is created in a human body. Simo knew the enemy was afraid of snipers, especially him. He tried to make the enemy fear more. He prepared well for everyday missions. Simo tried to avoid exposure to the enemy by maneuvering to his preselected firing positions under the cover of darkness. Before departing he had a good breakfast at the front-line supply depot.

Simo always departed early for his firing position in order to avoid unnecessary hurry during his “commute.” He took advantage of little depressions in the terrain while advancing towards the selected position. He raised his head only for short peeks to observe any enemy presence in the area. If Simo could not detect any, he continued his slow and undetectable movement towards his chosen position. This went on until he reached his destination. Early movement gave Simo time to observe the terrain, listen to the sounds of the nature and those of the enemy and take a good look at the terrain in general. He told me how he always memorized the shapes of the terrain, depressions, shadows, tree trunks and such. In addition, it was very important to remember the locations of the trees and their sizes; he also took careful note of the snow-covered treetops and branches.

A change to the terrain was an indication of enemy activity. The enemy had either moved from one place to another, dug in or assembled for attack or defense. There were scouting patrols trying to observe the whereabouts of the Finns. The enemy might also have placed a forward observer to direct a deadly artillery or mortar fire at the Finnish positions or to kill Simo himself. The enemy knew Simo, if not by name during the early part of the war then at least by his reputation and deeds. Effective use of the terrain and white snow camouflage suits caused the

Russians to give the Finnish soldier the name “Belaja smert”—white death. This name described in a very accurate way how Finns could move undetected in the forests, make a surprise strike and disappear back into the frozen woods without a trace.

In addition to the abovementioned skills, Simo’s father taught him a very important hunter’s skill: the ability to estimate distances. Simo stressed the importance of this skill each time we met. It was not a skill he was born with—he had done a lot of practice, first by estimating the distance to a target and then pacing out by steps. In most cases his estimate was almost perfect. When checking out his estimates a typical variation from the actual distance was one or two steps either way at distances of approximately 150 meters! As a young man he also learned to estimate the effects of wind and rain on shooting and conditions in forest.

When the discussion was about the use of the terrain I had to ask about something that had bothered me for a long time: it was claimed that Finnish snipers took positions up in trees when supporting a squad that was nearby or even directly under the tree. Simo laughed at my question: “We never shot from trees!” He told me that he never saw a Finnish soldier taking a firing position up in a tree; one would have been exposed to the enemy immediately. Simo also wondered how a sniper would ever escape the enemy fire in such a situation.

According to Simo, the Russians never put their snipers up in the trees either. To be honest, I felt that he thought I was crazy to even ask such a question. But this question needed to be posed because of the persistent discussion on this matter. The myth is busted, at least according to Simo Häyhä, and what he experienced in the Winter War in Kollaa.

Firing positions

Simo was clearly ahead of his time when it came to planning and preparing his firing positions. He favored natural hiding places that needed no alterations. If alterations or other preparations were needed, he did it with the utmost care in order to ensure everything blended into the surroundings. When preparation was necessary, he carried it out during the evening hours. One example of such preparation is that he often soaked the ground in front of his position with water so that his muzzle blast would not expose his location by disturbing the light snow.

I inquired many times whether Simo ever camouflaged his firing positions in any way. His usual answer was “never,” for the snow provided all the camouflage he required. In fact, the truth was slightly different. Simo prepared his positions well before he moved in—he just did not remember everything during the interviews. Accordingly, I usually repeated certain questions on various occasions until he was able to confirm the facts.

One can never overestimate the importance of a proper firing position. Simo was an expert in detecting enemy positions as changes in the terrain gave them away to an experienced observer like him. He knew how changes give away both a human and his position. Simo himself expertly prepared his firing positions. If he had not, he would not have survived.

In addition to proper camouflaging, it is very important that a shooter’s silhouette is not visible above the firing position. When needed Häyhä built a background from snow behind his position so that his silhouette was not detectable from the enemy lines. Simo often managed to do his preparations undisturbed. Yet, he was not always lucky. Many times the enemy tried to kill him, the ultimate sniper of all times, by antitank gun, field gun, and light mortar or sniper fire.

Simo managed to permanently remove five enemy snipers from the battlefield. That was not easily done, because they, better than most, could seek proper firing positions and use the terrain to their advantage.

From other sources I found out that Simo always camouflaged his weapon. He wound white gauze around the barrel and front part of the stock. The buttstock was in his armpit so there was no need to camouflage that. The snowsuit he wore was enough.

One could not camouflage the bolt and action nor could anything be applied on the sights or line of sight. The camouflage must stay in place while still allowing the normal use of the weapon. Gauze turned out to be very practical for the purpose: It offered good camouflage and stayed put during action, and did not slip or come loose at either end, which would prevent the use of sights.

Simo made no unnecessary movement while in his firing position as he knew that any movement would give it and him away. This is exactly what happened to a Russian sniper who had acted carelessly. The Russian had

estimated that the long distance between himself and Simo offered enough protection and exposed him self too early. Simo shot him at a distance of 450 meters.

After careful preparation and with excellent marksmanship, success followed our sniper. Before Christmas his record for one day was 23 enemies killed, at Christmas it increased to 25. During his last day in action his record for one day was 40. Simo often stalked the enemy in his flank position, which required thorough preparation and, above all, lots of courage.

Our interviews also brought out the fact that the workday was very short. According to Simo, there was not much one could get done during a short winter day. Darkness came early. It came early for the enemy as well, permanently.

Although one could easily assume that Simo never ate or drank while waiting in the firing position, this was not the case. After studying the other written sources it turned out that Simo often took with him sugar lumps or rye crisp when leaving for “work.” One could silently chew them and maintain the sugar balance of the body. It seemed, however that he did not drink anything while at work as thermal bottles were not available for every soldier and drink in any other kind of container would have frozen solid as temperatures were below –40 degrees almost all the time.

A sniper will definitely benefit from being small of stature. As a relatively short man, Simo could better utilize the shapes of the forest to his benefit where a sturdier, clumsier man could not go or fit. A small man is also more difficult to detect. Snow and soft terrain also offer more support to a small and lighter man than a sturdier one.

Thanks to his small size, he could utilize natural hiding places, such as one seen in a picture in this book. The bigger and taller soldier would have never fitted in that place. Simo always said about this particular sniper’s hide: “It’s as if God himself had made it for me!” That sentence tells it all.

Visiting Simo Häyhä’s former firing positions

Over the years while interviewing Simo Häyhä I became interested in seeing and studying his firing positions. I thought of his actions in the biting frost of the Winter War and that made me wonder what kind of firing positions he chose and what the “quality requirements” were. They must be out there somewhere; it should be possible to photograph them if only someone could tell me where in Kollaa to look for them.

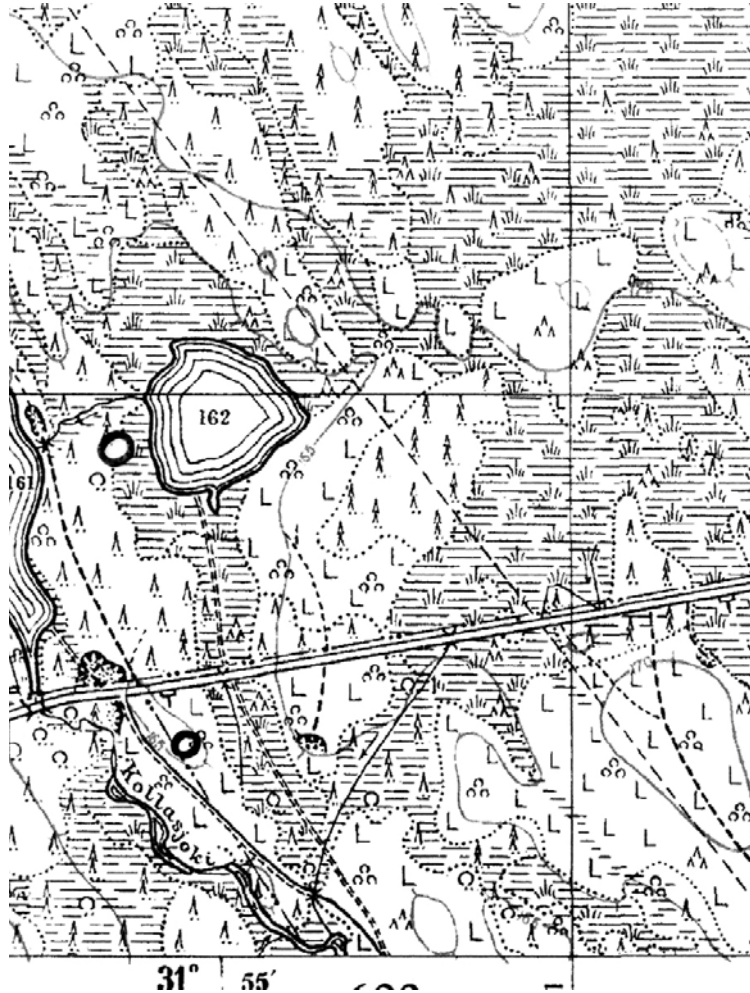
The only reliable source to find out the locations of firing positions was Simo himself. I had my doubts whether Simo could ever remember where they had been. Eventually he remembered two of them, being once more himself the definitive source of the information. Once I got the coordinates, I had to find out whether it was possible to visit it. There seemed to be an opportunity as in 2002 there was an expedition of military historians to Kollaa, now a part of Russia. I wanted to join them but things don’t always go as planned, my work and location simply made it possible to participate in the Kollaa expedition, and I had to drop out. I was interested in Simo’s firing positions and asked the expedition to photograph them for me, giving them as much information and advice as possible in the hope they could locate these sites.

The expedition travelled to the former Kollaa Front in May 2002 while I was driving around somewhere in the middle of nowhere in Lapland. The city of Rovaniemi was far behind and lots of work ahead. I spent some two weeks doing my daily work as the expedition was trying to locate Simo Häyhä’s sniper’s nests. Thanks to modern technology, I got a message while hiking and wandering in the middle of Lapland trying to avoid the reindeer. I just couldn’t have been any happier! Once again, many thanks to the expedition, your work and efforts are worth mentioning and remembering.



Vesa Valtonen settling himself down into one of the firing positions used by Simo Häyhä decades earlier. Vesa Valtonen aims in the direction the enemy would have been coming from. According to the expedition, the firing position was much better than in the textbook. This position was so well protected, that it could withstand the power of hostile artillery and grenade fire and, of course, machine-gun fire as well. Once the enemy was bombarding him with a small grenade-launcher “Naku.” Simo had to keep himself low in this position so as not to get wounded. The only damage the enemy caused was the loss of Simo’s greatcoat. Simo got only a few scratches on his back from the shrapnels, nothing more. He really did have fortune on his side many times.

The places and terrain of the battlefield have undergone considerable changes over the past six decades. The trees had been wiped out by heavy artillery fire concentrations. Today, the trees are relatively small and young in the region. It is impossible to find out where the firing lines and firing stations were in those days. The fire observer’s fox-holes have been destroyed also. Of course the ground itself is the same. The river Kollaa remains in the very same place, which is thanks to the conqueror as they have built almost nothing in the Kollaa river area; there is only one war memorial monument. One can still see some of the traces of the war: some empty shells, exploded shrapnels of grenades and empty cases lay beneath the rocks, parts of helmets and lots of unidentified war material. Touching any of this war detritus is ill-advised, for the ammunition may still be live and could explode if touched. The war can still claim more victims even though it is long over.



Some of Simo's firing positions on the Kollaa Front, marked with black circles. The positions can be found from the surroundings using this map.

One may still find parts of magazines of Finnish-made Suomi submachine gun while walking around the trenches. Some visitors found hundreds of used rounds chambered for $7.62 \times 53R$ not far from Simo's hide and from the firing position, too. It may be clear that those were not fired by Simo himself, at least not all of them. Most likely the cases found were shot with a machine gun rather than with the Mosin-Nagant rifle. Once I had examined the brass, I concluded that they looked a bit rounded at edges, indicating that they were most likely shot with an automatic weapon. Okay, I cannot guarantee that, if any conclusions can be drawn 60 years afterwards. One way or another, the Winter War was fought in extremely harsh circumstances where the defender was smaller in numbers but mentally stronger than the attacker.

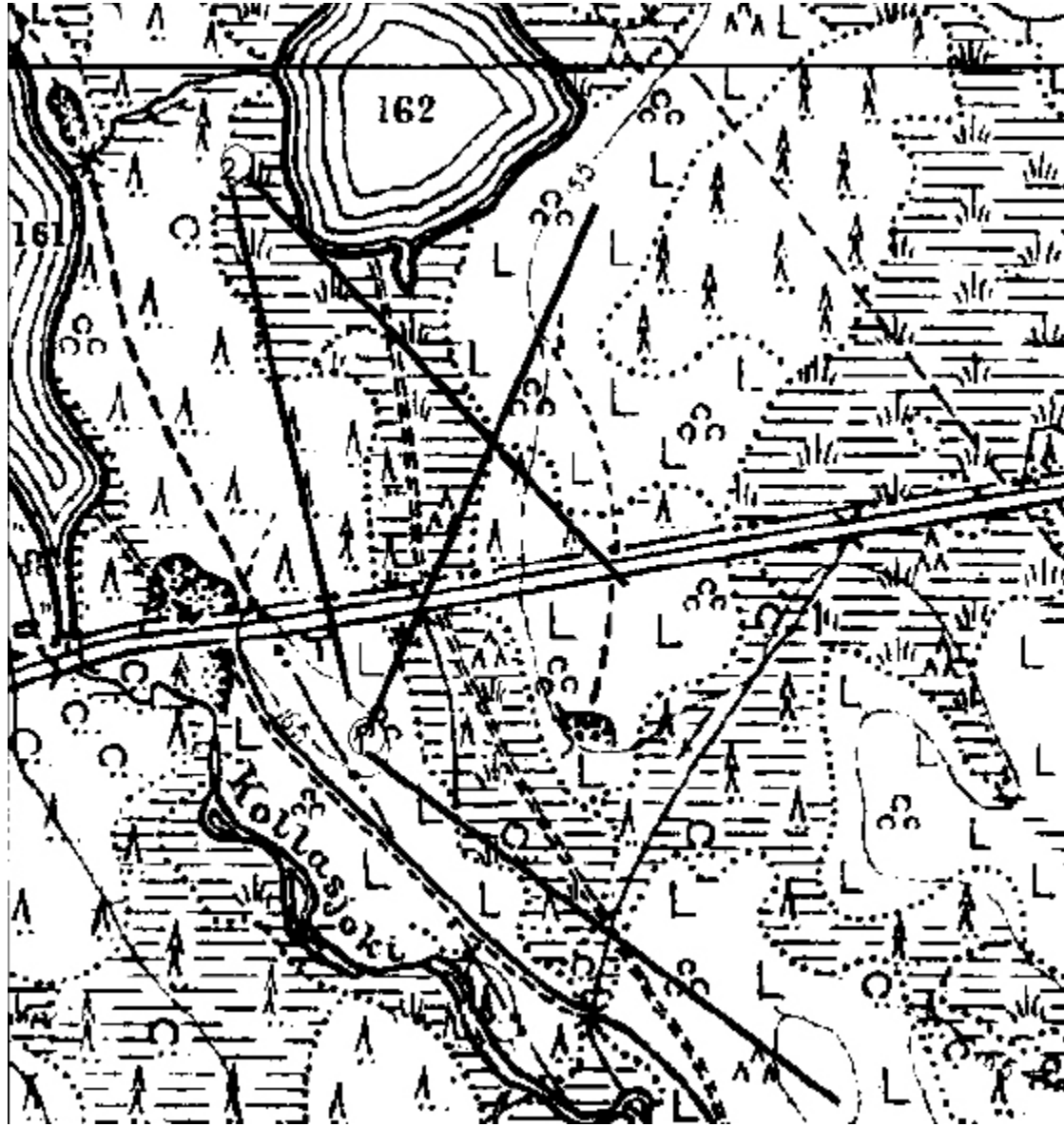


The river Kollaa, in spring time flood. In the time of Winter War blood was running on both riverbanks and in the river too.

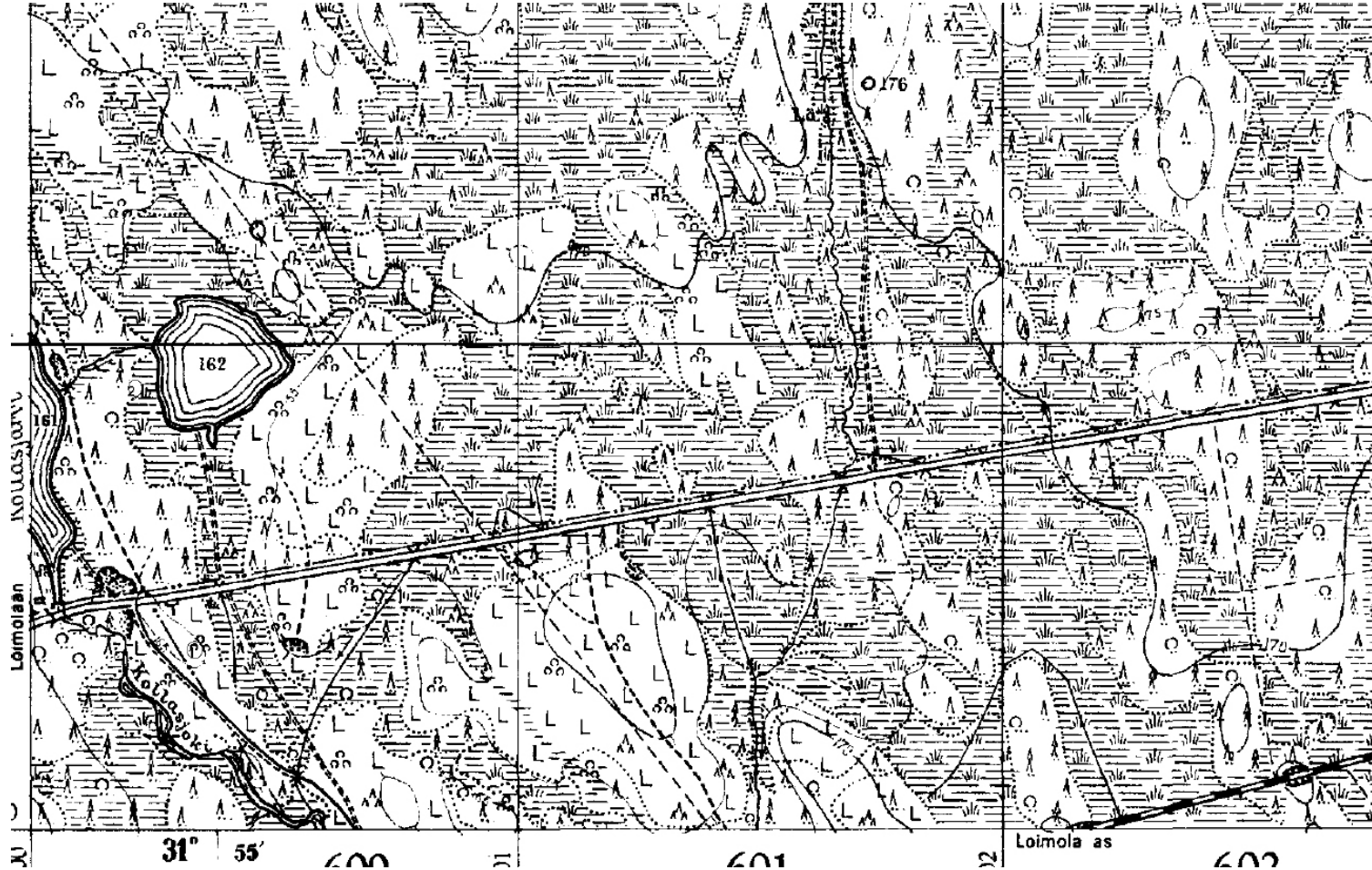
Even though Russia had the superiority in men and material, it could not utilize this advantage most of the time. On countless occasions, the Finns simply repelled Russian attacks. Only when the Russians brought even fresher and better equipped troops to the front did the Finns eventually have to pull back and disengage from the battle. Their soldiers couldn't resist or withstand the power of Russian artillery. When disengaging from the front, however, the Finns fought furiously and killed scores of Russians, showing their determination to defend their country. Kollaa was a stable front and the enemy couldn't break the defenses, even though Finns were pulling back. Finnish politicians were doing the job for which they had been elected. Luckily, the negotiations were successful and peace was agreed. The peace agreement was settled. It came none too soon, the Finns were exhausted and they had given their best in defending their country.

As can be seen in the photos taken by the expedition, Simo's sniper's nest was just like those illustrated in a training or field manual. It had all the specifications set to the excellent firing position or sniper's hide: a wide shooting area, a good and steady platform for the rifle and a safe path from the sniper's hide to the rear. It was also defended against enemy observation and enemy fire as a bonus. The rocks all over Simo's sniper's hide gave him extraordinary cover from artillery shells or grenades. While located in his nest, he had a far greater chance of survival than the average infantry soldier.

The visit to Simo's firing positions was more than a success. By visiting his location, the expedition saw at first hand the terrain over the Finns fought; terrain which did not make the task easier. A visit to Simo's firing positions also tells its own tale of fury and violence for future generations—that they should never forget the Finnish combat spirit of the Winter War where conditions were exhausting and extreme. And Simo Häyhä was one of the key characters in creating that spirit—Kollaa did not fall!



Simo Häyhä's firing positions and shooting sectors on the Kollaa Front. From those positions he could knock off the enemy from a long distance.



Heavy fighting took place in this terrain. The river Kollaa is seen in the bottom left corner on this map. In the center of the map is the road that the enemy used to move its material and troops. In the bottom right corner is the railroad.



The monument erected in Kollaa to remember the Winter War. The text translates as: "Kollaa holds."

Simo Häyhä's Rifle

There has been much speculation surrounding the exact model of Simo Häyhä's rifle that he carried during the war. The most common misunderstanding was that it was a "war trophy," a Model 91-30 with a PU or PEM scope or an M/28 rifle. In fact, as Simo confirmed to me, the rifle he used was the M/28-30. According to one account, Simo's rifle was originally intended to be given to a Civil Guard member in a neighboring village. When this man, however, moved away to another district, the gun was issued to Simo. This account is most likely correct, though there is no definitive proof to it. However, as history would prove, this was fortunate for the tremendous success Simo achieved with this weapon several years later in the Winter War.

History of the Finnish Infantry Rifle

Infantry Rifle M/91—"Finnish"

The Russian infantry rifle, the M/91 "Mosin-Nagant," was adopted as the basic Finnish rifle model in 1918 with an inventory in excess of 180,000 pieces. During the early years of Finland's independence following World War I, these rifles could be used in their original condition. However, many suffered from age and hard usage during that war. Primitive storage conditions also hindered efforts to maintain these weapons in usable condition.

For these reasons, a comprehensive repair and maintenance initiative was launched in the 1920s. The barrels and the rifling were worn out as well, with the Russian-era sights causing particular concern. The original Russian sights used the "arshin" measure, with one arshin being 0.71 meters, which was slightly more than 2 feet or approximately one step taken by an individual while walking in the woods. These sights were generally considered impractical. M 91 rifles acquired from foreign sources suffered from similar problems.

As the condition of the weapons steadily worsened, the Material Department, part of the Finnish Ministry of Defense, finally made the decision to upgrade the rifles. In 1926, a book titled *Rifle 91, Structure, Maintenance and Handling* was published. By 1927, specific repair instructions were written and distributed to all units and depots.

The following changes were made: the rear sights were brought under the metric scale (3, 4, 5.5, 7 and 8.5). In early 1926, the Material Department required that an additional setting of 150 meters was added. The stocks of the weapons were repaired, sanded and treated. In summary, a total of 66,000 rifles were upgraded by using this approach between 1919 and 1923. In addition, worn-out barrels were also either replaced or, to use a term from this period, "retubed." Between 1925 and 1927, Arms Depot 1 used this method, adopted from foreign sources, to retube over 13,000 worn-out barrels of the M/91. At the same time, new barrels were ordered from the Tikkakoski factory. Acquisitions of new barrels continued in 1940–1943, the supplier being either Tikkakoski or VKT (Valtion Kivääritehdas: Government Rifle Factory). All in all, this modernization program went on until 1944.

The M/91 rifle fulfilled its expectations during the decisive years of Finland's early existence; serving as the nation's main rifle model in its basic infantry training centers during the Continuation War. It should be noted that the M/91 was part of the Finnish Army's inventory until 1988, although minimal spending on defense was one reason that the rifle remained in the inventory for such a considerable number of years.

In conclusion, the M/91 was a good investment for Finland; it has been used in all of its wars during the 20th century. Today, a few M/91s can still be found in collectors' arsenals. The vast majority, however, have either been scrapped or sold to foreign purchasers. Simo Häyhä's first rifle was an M/91 made by Westinghouse.



Infantry rifle M/91.

The World War II-era M/91 Finnish Infantry Rifle was characterized by several features: a domestic “thin” barrel made to the original specifications by Tikkakoski or VKT, dated 1940–1944; a Finnish-made stock made of two pieces and usually treated with oil; metallic sling holders with small screw-attached supporting plates; a standardized rear sight M/1910 with metric range settings; and a Finnish-made high front sight.

Other rifle models

Cavalry needed their own rifle model, which met their specific requirements. Modifications to the cavalry rifle M/91 were mostly the same as for the infantry rifle. The other changes were mainly to sling attachments and bayonet, which was shortened from 50 cm to 37.5 cm.

The Infantry Rifle M/91/24 was a further developed version of refurbished rifles. The barrel suppliers were SIG (Schweizerische Industrie-Gesellschaft Neuhausen) and German Venus rifle factory. The barrels were 1.5 mm thicker than those of the original design and the trigger mechanism was improved by adding a jewel trigger (of that time). This rifle was well liked by the Civil Guard and was given the nickname “Lotta Kivääri,” “Lotta Rifle,” because Suojeluskuntien Lotta järjestö—Civil Guard Lotta organization (Civil Guard for Women, a support organization)—had originally funded some of the barrel replacements.

The Infantry Rifle M/27 was a shortened version of M/91. The barrel length was 685 mm compared to 800 mm of M/91. There were other upgrades, to the trigger mechanism, sights, sling attachments and the grip part of the stock. This version was not a success. Many disadvantages were found with bayonet fixing and its durability while shooting. This problem was also reflected in the stock endurance and the barrels were believed to have a shorter life.

The Cavalry Rifle M/27 was a further development of the Finnish Infantry Rifle M/91. The Material Department made a decision in 1934 to assemble 2,000 rifles. This rifle was shorter than its predecessors and deliveries were targeted for the Cavalry Brigade where the rifles were delivered by 1935. This rifle saw action with cavalry troops in 1939–1940 as well as 1941–1945.

The Infantry Rifle M/28 was developed to meet the requirements of increased shooting practice among the Civil Guard. The increased use of shooting ranges had exposed several shortcomings in existing rifles. The Civil Guard high command (SkY) nominated civil engineer V. V. Kolho as the chairman of the committee appointed to investigate the shortening of the rifle and make recommendations on the matter. The committee assembled on April 28, 1927 and submitted its report to SkY on June 4, 1927. The committee recommended the following improvements that SkY should attend to immediately: the barrel should be shortened from 800mm to 685mm; the barrel thickness should be increased to 24mm in the vicinity of the rear sight housing; the stock should be tightly mounted near the action but the barrel itself should float as freely as possible from the wooden parts; and the side rings should be designed to connect the stock and the hand guard not to be connected to the barrel.

Rifle M/28-30

This was the model of infantry rifle used by Simo Häyhä. Its overall length was 1190 mm with SkY-designed barrel length of 685 mm and it weighed 4.3 kg. The sight radius was 59 cm which was long enough for accurate aiming. The barrel carried the stampings “SAKO” and “SkY.” The rifle had a fixed, permanently attached magazine and feeding ramp. Simo Häyhä’s rifle carried the serial number 60974.



Infantry rifle M/28.



Simo Häyhä's sniping rifle, infantry rifle M/28-30.

This model, which was developed from the preceding models, was very successfully fielded in the Winter War and World War II. It was not the ultimate evolution of the Finnish infantry rifle, but it was the best model of the time.

A few years of field use of the Infantry Rifle M/28 exposed the fact that, despite many improvements, the Old Russian rear sight (M/1910 "Konovalov") still had several shortcomings when it came to accuracy and durability in field conditions. The rear sight was structurally impractical, inaccurate and poorly protected, which reduced performance on the battlefield.

During the 1930s the Civil Guard high command employed weapons inspector Harry Mansner, who set off with a design for a new rear sight to replace the original on Rifle M/28. The rear sight was reborn: the most significant improvements were reliable fixing around the barrel and general structural superiority. The sight rod was straight with a carved rod below showing the markings 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 10: the numbers indicated distance in hundreds of meters. Despite the lowest value being 2, the sights could be used at shorter distances. Harry Mansner decided to add the new range to the rear sight. The marking was 150. This range is also the basic range in Finnish military shooting ranges.

The fixing of the front sight to the barrel was strengthened with a sturdier screw, which was designed to better withstand recoil and other hazards. The protective covers of the front sight were opened a little to improve the sight picture as well as let more light to the front sight. The side adjustment was improved to enable the field adjustments without special tools; a regular screwdriver was sufficient for the purpose and the specific sight adjustment tool was no longer required. Finally, the infantry soldier had a sturdy, reliable weapon which had easy sight adjustment in field conditions.

In 1933 further fine tuning was done based on the performance of the rifle thus far, and some larger changes were made. Those changes included improving the steel used for barrels—the original Swedish Fagersta steel was replaced by domestic Lokomo steel. An aluminum adapter was deployed between the side rings and the barrel to reduce the effects of heat. The cleaning rod nut inside the stock was redesigned as the free (almost) floating barrel no longer supported the rod in its place. All these changes improved the rifle's performance and enabled optimal vibration of the barrel.

Even more polishing was done in 1934. In March 1934, a simple and cost-effective improvement was made to the magazine to reduce jamming and to improve overall reliability. On the part that held the neck of the incoming cartridge was raised a slight "bump" that forced each cartridge a little backwards when loaded into the magazine so that the rim of the cartridge below was behind the rim of cartridge above. Now when cartridges were inserted from a clip, they were automatically properly aligned in the magazine without becoming attached to each other. Magazines with such modification were stamped with "HV," to identify them as jam-free. The trigger mechanism still had the extra sensitivity spring inherited from M/91-24. Two silver steel alloy bolts were inserted to the triggering surface to

let the shooter feel clear stages in the trigger pull.



Despite many significant improvements the basic model was not in production very long. Only the first order of 2,700 rifles with serial numbers—up to approximately 35700—was completed by April 1934. The final version of the rifle M/28-30 was created in April 1934 with serial numbers starting from 35710. Some minor changes were made even after that, mainly about the manufacturing methods used for the stock. In April 1937 Sako started to manufacture new butt stocks made of birch wood. Premium quality stocks were stamped with SkY approval on the right hand side.

M/28-30 rifles were ordered from Sako as an upgrade of existing models. The required new parts were manufactured and the rifles were reassembled to the latest design. The base model utilized was the infantry rifle M/91. A special sniper version was also designed.

The rifle M/28-30 got very positive feedback from the Civil Guard. In 1932 each district had participated in the development of the new sight and this work now reaped benefits. The synergies worked. The Civil Guard could not afford to purchase the M/28-30 for all its members who wanted it. As a compromise members were given the opportunity to obtain a “private” spare rifle. In practice, this meant that a guard member was allowed to exchange or modify his current-issue, government-owned older rifle for an M/28-30 by privately funding the majority of the costs. The rest of the cost was paid from government funds. A Civil Guard member, however, was not the owner of the gun although it was his personal-issue weapon and he could use it in his private shooting practice. Naturally, all guard members took their personal-issue rifles with them when they left for the front lines in the Winter War.

When the Winter War broke out, the Civil Guard possessed well over 30,000 modern, high-quality M/28-30 rifles. The Civil Guard members had rifles that they knew, that they had zeroed themselves and that they knew inside and out when it came to cleaning and maintenance. All this paid off—these rifles were in much better condition than those the government issued as the military spending was low and storage facilities abysmal.

The latter part of the 1930s was the heyday of the rifle M/28-30. It enjoyed total confidence among the Civil Guard. The voluntary defense organization had succeeded in developing an internationally respected rifle. Without this the army would have had to resort to the infantry rifle M/91 due to the many issues with the infantry rifle M/27.

In 1937 the rifle M/28-30 received well-earned respect, when it was selected as the official military rifle model for the Helsinki World Shooting Championships. All participants were to shoot with this rifle model. This meant that active Civil Guard members had certain advantages; they knew the rifle and had mastered its use. Eventually Sako Oy manufactured 440 rifles from barrels found to be particularly accurate. These rifles carry serial numbers

48791–49467 and manufacturing year stamp 1937. On the left side of the chamber is the stamping “MM” (which stands for World Championships in Finnish). The stocks were made of hazel wood with the silver-plated square-shaped emblem of the championships. Only 83 rifles were actually used in the championships, those numbered 48963–49466.

The rifle M/28-30 was part of the Civil Guard arsenal throughout the 1930s. This model was in full strength in the Winter War and got fame and glory in the battle. It was without doubt the best and most reliable rifle, never letting its user down in any condition or situation.

Finnish sniper rifles before the Winter War

During the Winter War the Finnish army had only very few sniper rifles. Most sniping was done with open sights although all captured enemy equipment was reused for a good purpose. Major military powers had already got scoped rifles during World War I. During Finland's civil war in 1918 such rifles were not deployed on any significant scale. During the early days of independence, the army had to concentrate on obtaining sufficient amounts of very basic materials for the infantryman; specialties such as scoped rifles were not even considered before 1920. Individual optical sights were purchased in the early 1920s.

One fundamental reason for the lack of attention to sniper rifles was that they did not exist in the captured Russian material during the civil war. The czar-era Russian infantry did not possess a rifle with optical sights during World War I.

Imports of rifle scopes for hunting began in the 1920s and the results of experiments were encouraging. The Combat Materiel Department of Ministry of Defense decided to launch a basic investigation into the matter in January 1927. A committee led by Major T. Raatikainen was established to investigate available scopes for rifles and machine guns and to make recommendations for the most favorable choices.

The committee finally acquired eight different scopes for field trials. Four of them were variants of Hensoldt & Söhnen “Ziel-Dialyt” with different magnifications. The fifth was the model “Dialytam” from same manufacturer, the sixth was Gerard Landlicht with 2× magnification, the seventh candidate was C. P. Goerz with 4× magnification and the last one was Zeiss Zielvier with 2.5× magnification. The first six were disqualified outright as structurally unfit for a military rifle; the two others were taken to further consideration for a decision in principle.

When the committee submitted its final report on September 8, 1927, they recommended fitting the Russian M/91 rifle with a Zeiss rifle scope. From a structural standpoint, they recommended using a strengthened German mount, that the bolt handle should be bent downwards, and a detachable cheek piece attached to the stock.

Based on these recommendations, only a handful of prototypes were assembled. This fell far short from mass production of any kind. Most likely, the Ministry of Defense wanted to wait for the introduction of the new military rifle M/27 and investigate its usability for sniper duties. In December 1931 the combat material department made a special order for Depot 1 to manufacture a scope mount for one M/27 rifles. This was just a single experiment and did not lead to mass production.

Several years passed before any serious effort was made to acquire a mass production capable sniper rifle for the Finnish Army. One main reason was that there was no sniper designation in the whole army or a position for a sniper within a company or platoon. There was no plan for deployment of snipers either as it was not yet part of the tactical-operative planning. The Finnish Army had more important things to worry about, very elementary things such as trying to provide basic equipment for ordinary troops. There were huge shortages and the government did very little to improve the situation. In 1926 the defense evaluation board submitted its report; it estimated that 1,624 sniper rifles were needed, however the difficult times with a general insufficiency of funds simply did not permit improvement of the material situation despite the official recommendations.

It was around this time that the Department of Defense committee for sniper rifles and Civil Guard High Command got interested in developing a sniper rifle. A handful of Japanese rifles were mounted with scopes and the rifles were distributed among the best shooters for a period of evaluation. One of the test shooters was President P. E. Svinhufvud himself in January 1929. P. E. Svinhufvud showed great interest in the matter; he was a successful competition shooter and an avid hunter himself; one could not have found a better participant for the test group.

The Japanese rifle was just a test bed. The caliber alone (6.5mm) meant that it was hardly suitable as part of

the sniper equipment of the Finnish Army. The feedback and experience from the test shootings however encouraged the material department of the High Command to carry out further investigations on the matter.

In 1929 the main interest in this area focused on the possibility of modifying the Civil Guard's own rifle M/28 for sniping purposes. One sample was sent to Germany to be fitted with a proper scope and mount. It was received thus equipped in the fall of 1929. The rifle was tested in Riihimäki on October 23, 1929 and was generally considered satisfactory and by March 1930 ten more units had been put on order.

These rifles had the scope mounted with a fitting on the receiver rather than screws. In theory this seemed to be a more advanced and solid method. Test firings of this model were carried out in Huopalahti on March 3–4, 1930. During these tests only the one scope and mount were used as more units were still on order.

Sniper Rifle M/28

The Material Department of the High Command possessed single units of Hensoldt Ziel Dialyt 3×, Oigee Gnom 4× and Oigee Luxor 6× scopes. The custom-made mounts for fitting them with the M/28 were ordered from Skoha (Civil Guard shop/depot). Additional purchases of Zeiss Zielklein 2.25×, Bush Visardrei 3×, Visarfunf 4.5×, Hensoldt, Ziel Dialyt 5× and Zeis Zielfmulti 1–4× were made at the same time.

In April 1931, the Civil Guard's own "Sniper Rifle Committee" started its own evaluation and testing of ten different scopes. Based on these evaluations, the Finnish High Command concluded that the scope(s) must have both elevation and windage adjustments. One of these was "Russky" from Busch. This nickname was the result of recent sale of this very same scope to the Soviet Army. Luckily, just before the final procurement was done the improved version of Civil Guard rifle M/28-30 was available and was selected as the prototype of the sniper rifle project.

Only 11 scoped rifles resulted from this particular M/28 project. They were not left to collect dust in storage, since all were deployed to the front lines during the Winter War, though there is no data available on confirmed kills with them.

Captured enemy sniper rifles manufactured between 1938 and 1942 had almost identical side mounts to that of the M/28, which meant that the Finns could use captured mounts on M/28 sniper rifles.

Moving towards the M/33 Sniper Rifle

After extensive rifle testing and field testing period in 1931 it was time to make decisions. The Civil Guard High Command was planning to procure a simplified version of the Busch Visar 4.5× Dr. Zf. 104 scope. As before, a sample from Carl Zeiss was ordered through Skoha. In July a request for a proposal was submitted for an additional 25 units of this scope.

As the rifle M/28 was being upgraded to an M/28-30, the scope purchases were delayed until 1933. By the end of 1932 those 25 scope mounts and required gunsmith work were ordered from Sako. Some changes were required for the German scopes: the windage adjustment knob had to have markings "oik" and "vas" (left and right) added for easier use, elevation had to have a scale with markings for every 100 meters and maximum range of 1,200 meters. The High Command received the 25 scopes and mounts customized for M/28-30 rifles in December 1933. The sniper rifle M/33 was born. The majority of the new M/33 sniper rifles and their special accessories and instructions were distributed for qualification testing to various Civil Guard districts. They were given one year to conclude their testing and submit their findings and recommendations for further improvements. As a matter in fact the rifles remained in hands of the Civil Guard Districts until the end of 1937.

Captured sniper rifles

The Red Army's standard-issue infantry rifle was the M/91-30, which was selected for this purpose on April 28, 1930. The main improvements compared to the M/91 were the upgraded rear and front sights as well as redesigned trigger mechanisms, a dual component for feeding mechanism and a strengthened grip. The stock itself was sturdier and somewhat thicker than that on the original cavalry rifle. By the Winter War, a total of 1.3 million rifles had been

manufactured and by early 1940s roughly 4 million were manufactured. The rifle weighed 4.1 kilos with a barrel length of 730 mm.

The Finnish military intelligence was aware of the existence and features of this rifle. An improved knowledge naturally was acquired when captured rifles were sent for further analysis. A total of 29,000 M/91-30 rifles were captured during the Winter War.



Infantry rifle M/91-30.

The Red Army realized that the M/91-30 was an outstanding design and started to modify them as sniper rifles by fitting them with PE or PEM scopes. The PE was a copy of the Zeiss scope while the PEM was a newer version which did not have an eyepiece adjustment, thereby reducing manufacturing costs.

These rifles were different from the standard version with an improved finishing of the barrel and trigger mechanism, downwards bent bolt handle and a side fixture for the scope mount. The early models had mounts that were directly fixed above the receiver with a two-piece mount. By 1934 this was replaced with a new sturdy and reliable quick fix model which was attached to the left side of the receiver that had a special adapter piece for it. The special feature of this mount was its ability to rough zero the scope for both elevation and windage.

The mass production of sniper rifles started in 1932 with the total number of 750 rifles manufactured that year. By the end of 1930s, the annual output of weapons had risen to almost 10,000 rifles. More worrying was the fact that by the Winter War, the Red Army had an excess of 50,000 scoped sniper rifles. The main Russian manufacturer was the Tula Armory.

A small number of these sniper rifles were captured during the Winter War. All of them had the early model of scope mount fitted on top of the receiver. These rifles were immediately redeployed for Finnish use, yet the small numbers available made no decisive edge over the enemy and the majority of the Finnish snipers still used their iron sight rifles.

Some Simonov automatic rifles were captured during the Winter War, although the scoped versions were extremely rare. The technology was being developed and a few more wars would be fought before self-loading rifles found their way into regular sniper use.

Open sight or scope?

Simo Häyhä used an iron sight, which may come as something of a surprise to the reader. One must remember the shortages during the Winter War—there were not enough scopes to go round, actually there were hardly any available. Modern sniper rifles nowadays have either optical or optoelectronic sights that give their user decisive superiority over a user of regular iron sights: the longer the shooting distance, the greater the superiority. Even so, there were several reasons for Simo's preference on sights.

Every rifle is unique. Even rifles of the same model and manufacturing have their individual differences and variations. These variations come from the moving parts, their fitting and the finishing and overall manufacturing tolerances. The trigger mechanism, action, receiver, wooden and metal components in stock are all full of moving parts or parts whose alignment affects the accuracy and overall performance of the weapon. The trigger pull, the movement before and after the shot and general accuracy are all unique features that do not depend on the make and model itself.

Simo Häyhä had learned to shoot with his rifle while a Civil Guard member, and he knew all its features including the trigger pull. This experience is the best possible life insurance in the battlefield as it can take years to reach a sufficient level in handling and using a rifle. For Simo, the rifle was an extension of his own hand and he

mastered it completely, almost perfectly.

The scopes were rare issues during those times, as it was the year 1939 and even if there were scopes to hand out, learning how to effectively use them would simply have taken too much time. The best time and place to learn the basics on how to properly use a scope is during peacetime on shooting range—learning something totally new during war will cost too much own blood. It is possible, but risky.

Simo Häyhä was also familiar with the adjustment of his gun sights, and zeroing his rifle for various distances came naturally. He had this skill from years of experience, he did not need to study or learn it from a manual. Häyhä's rifle was an M/28-30 and it was this very rifle for which captain Harry Mansner had developed his sturdy and accurate combat sight. This sight was reliable, accurate and strong enough for demanding use in the battlefield. At that time there was no better iron sight anywhere in the world.

As anyone with experience in shooting with a scope knows, the head is more exposed when using a scope than it is when using iron sights. The more of the body that is exposed, the larger target it becomes for the enemy.

A scope is much more sophisticated apparatus than an iron sight; it has moving parts that are prone to get damaged. Scopes at that time did not tolerate rough handling and losing the zero was very easy. The lens of a scope is very vulnerable, especially in winter; it could become covered by snow and ice or become foggy from the breath or sweat of the shooter. According to Simo, the shooting itself took more time with a scope compared to iron sights; one needs more time to acquire a target and open fire.

Even Russian snipers did not necessarily have any prior shooting experience with their scopes, so it took them some time to acquire a target. According to Simo, “A Russian sniper used a scope. Shooting with a scope seemed to be slow, and it took time. The enemy scoped rifles took left [Shooters missed their target from left].” I tried to investigate this observation of his further but I never really found any feasible explanation.

Of course there are obvious benefits to using a scope over iron sights, including target recognition and range determination (assuming that the reticle supports range estimation). Compared to the naked eye, it also enables better general observation of the battlefield and modern technology offers night vision features. The latest development in military small arms includes thermal imaging sights and these devices will be increasingly found among snipers, even on a larger scale in the near future. With thermal imaging, operations can be undertaken in any light, weather or season.

Using Simo Häyhä's Experiences for the Finnish Army

Since the Winter War, Simo Häyhä's lessons have been actively employed in the Finnish Defense Forces when it comes to sniper training. Simo Häyhä fought in the light company of JR 34, and the Karelian Jaegerbattalion is the honorary caretaker of the memory and heritage of JR 34. All sniper trainees are told about Simo Häyhä, what type of soldier he was, his achievements and how he contributed to the spirit and importance of the Winter War.

Simo Häyhä was appointed honorary jaeger of the Karelian Jaeger Battalion during the 1978 Defense Fair in Ilomantsi. During this same event Simo donated his honorary rifle to the Karelian Jaeger Battalion in order that it be preserved for future generations. Simo Häyhä's rifle and his second lieutenant's uniform are on display in glass cabinets in the heritage room of the North Karelian Brigade.

There is a photo album in that very same room containing many of the pictures seen in this book. There is also a map of the Kollaa battles. Finally there one can truly understand what the Winter War was all about. It is a very good introduction to the realities and requirement of a wartime sniper.

Simo Häyhä's shooting techniques were studied in great detail while he was still alive. His was a vital experience and it would have been a huge oversight not to interview the greatest sniper of all times, or to leave his knowledge undocumented. The latest book on sniper training in the Finnish Army is the *Sniper's Handbook*, published in 2003. I participated actively in the writing process of this manual for three years (2000–2002). It is about preserving Simo's thoughts for new generations. It introduces some methods which have been common since Simo's times, and some that represent brand-new thinking resulting from improvements in weaponry and other equipment. Roughly speaking, the principles of a sniper's work are still the same, despite the changes brought about by technological advances.





Simo Häyhä presents his honorary rifle and hands it over to the Executive Officer Lieutenant Colonel Jaakko Aatolainen of the Karelian Jaeger Battalion. Simo was awarded the honorary rifle for being the very best shooter on the Kollaa Front, in February 17, 1940 by Colonel Svensson. The weapon was presented to the XO of 12th Division on behalf of Eugen Johansson. XO Lieutenant Colonel Jaakko Aatolainen promised to take good care of Simo's honorary rifle. On this occasion, there were many high-ranking officers present. One of them was the Commander-in-Chief of the Finnish Defense Forces.



Simo poses in the front of his honorary rifle in the Karelian Jaeger Battalion's Heritage Room. On the right side of Simo there is a mannequin with the gear and weaponry of an infantry man of 1980s. Both weapons were the best available in their time, both were equipped with iron sights.



Valuable articles in the North Karelian Brigade Heritage Room. On the left, a Mauser pistol, 9 mm caliber, and on the right, a Luger pistol. According to the engraving on the metal plate on the wooden parts of the pistol handle, the weapon was in the use of PR-troops. (Robie Kulokivi)



The case of artifacts relating to Simo Häyhä, and below the metal plate on the front of the case. Simo Häyhä had many nicknames. The most famous of these are “Taika-ampuja” (Magic Shooter) and “Simuna,” Simegg.



The "Simo Häyhä" Competition for snipers

A competition in Simo Häyhä's name has been organized for many decades by the North Karelian Brigade and its predecessor, the Karelian Jaeger Battalion. The culmination of sniper training is the Simo Häyhä competition where shooting distances vary between 175 and 490 meters. The Simo Häyhä competition filters real aces from the mainstream as it has been designed to replicate the real conditions and tactical situations that were so familiar to Simo during the Winter War. Naturally the fear factor, hunger or cold experienced in a real war can never be reproduced in training, not to mention the danger of enemy small-arms and artillery fire, or fire concentrations aimed at the snipers...

The Simo Häyhä competition is the culmination of a sniper's training and takes place during the final part of the training. The purpose of the competition is to assess an individual's ability to perform the demanding duty of a sniper. Estimating the distance, a skill so much emphasized by Simo Häyhä, has a key role in this competition as well. The competition has always been a kind of master's thesis for Finnish snipers regardless of the development in weaponry and equipment, at least in the North Karelian brigade which trains conscripts for wartime sniper duties.

There are six stages. In each, the shooter must independently approach the firing position, locate the target, recognize the target and estimate the range without any additional equipment. Scores for each stage are awarded based on how few shots are needed to destroy the target. The shooter with the highest total score is the winner.

SÄÄNNÖT SIMO HÄYHÄN KILPAILUUN

1 §

Simo Häyhän kilpailu käydään Karjalan Jääkäripataljoonan perinnejoukossa Kollaen taiste-
luissa kunnostautuneen tarkka-ampujan kunniaksi.
Kilpailu liittyy Simo Häyhän 18. 03. 78 Karjalan Jääkäripataljoonalle lahjoittamaan kivääriin.

2 §

Kilpailuun osallistuvat tarkka-ampujiksi koulutettavat 1/78-saapumiserästä alkaen.

3 §

Kilpailu suoritetaan joko saapumiserän ampumaleirin yhteydessä Sotinpurolla tai erillisenä
kilpailuna Kontiorannassa. Tehtävänä on usean, n. 200–600 m ampumaetäisyydelle sijoi-
tetun maalin tuhoaminen. Aseena käytetään joko tarkka-ampujakivääriä tai kivääriä m/39.

4 §

Kilpailun johtaa tarkka-ampujakurssin järjestävän yksikön päällikkö.

5 §

Perinnehuoneessa, Simo Häyhän kiväärin yhteydessä säilytetään levyke, johon kaiverretaan
kunkin kilpailun voittajan nimi ja saapumiserä. Henkilökohtaisena palkintona voittaja saa
taiteilija Veikko Jalavan suunnitteleman, Talvisodan taistelijaa esittävän hopeisen levykkeen,
johon on kaiverrettu voittajan nimi.

6 §

Näitä sääntöjä on tehty yhdeksän yhdenmukaista kappaletta. Sääntöjen alkuperäiskappa-
leen metallinen jäljennös säilytetään perinnehuoneessa.
Muut kappaleet ovat lahjoittajien Simo Häyhän, Väinö Bromanin, Erkki Bromanin, Erkki Palo-
lamin ja Ahti Vuorensolan sekä Karjalan Jääkäripataljoonassa pataljoonan komentajan,
tarkka-ampujakurssin järjestävän yksikön päällikön ja liikuntakasvatusupseerin hallussa.

Pataljoonan komentaja
Everstilutnantti


Aatolainen

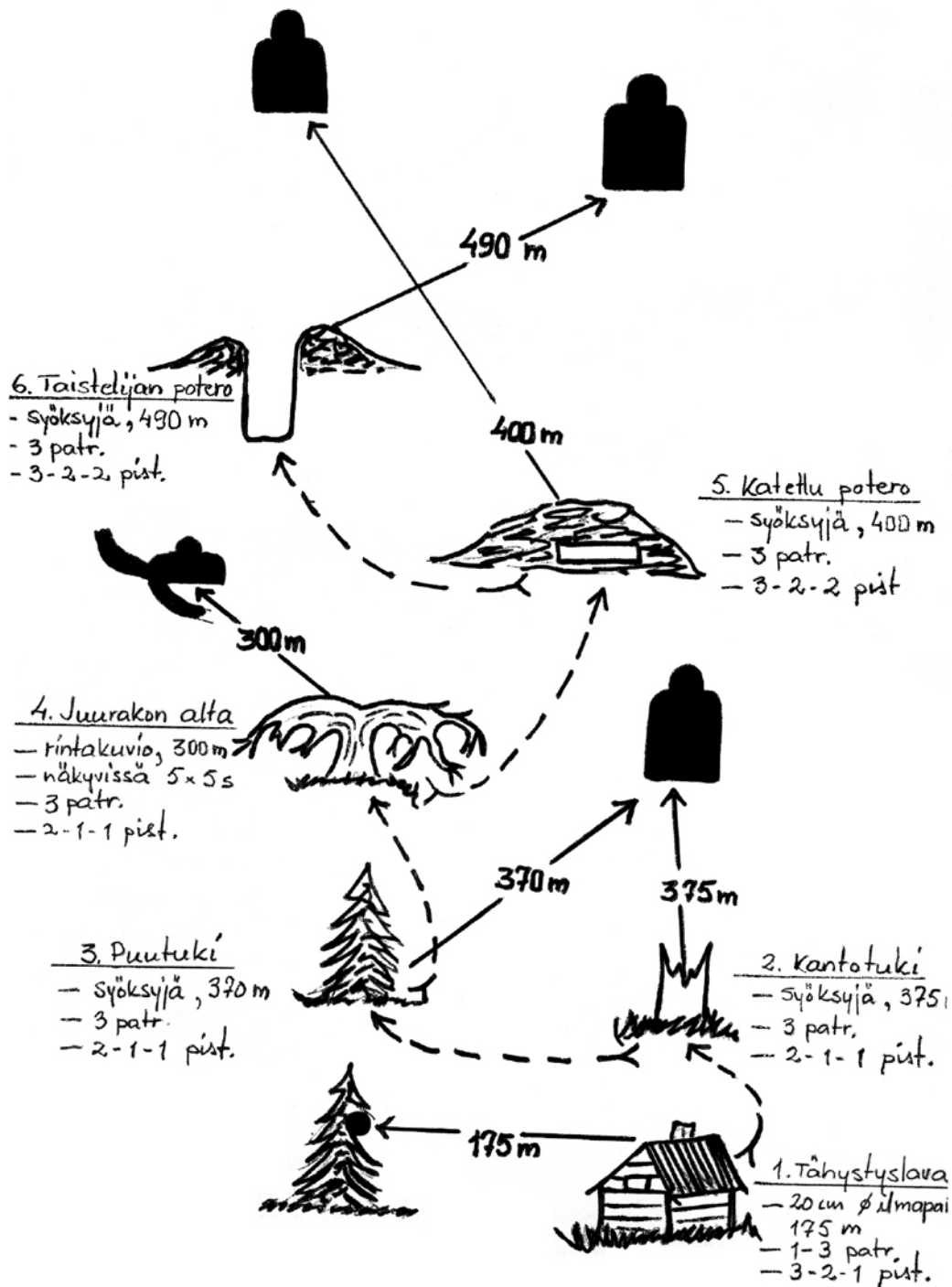
9/JA/RR

Liikuntakasvatusupseeri
Ylivääpeli


K. Kettunen

The original rules of the Simo Häyhä Competition for Snipers.

SIMO HÄYHÄN KILPAILU



The original diagram for the Simo Häyhä sniping competition. It shows all the firing positions and the shooting distances, the amount of ammunition permitted and the points awarded for the shots required to hit the target. The maximum number of points is 18, but achieving this is a hard task.



Karjalan Jääkäripataljoona tervehtii Kunniajääkäriään kiittäen menneistä ja toivottaen hyvää vointia.

Karjalan jääkärien komentaja

Eversiluutnantti

Jaakko Laakso

The Karelian Jaeger Battalion cherishes the heritage and traditions of the Jaeger Regiment 34. Here the reader can see the front page of the file made of the photos taken in the very first Simo Häyhä Competition for snipers, which was organized in 1978.

The file is stored in the heritage room, some of the photos in it are used in this book.



XO Lieutenant Colonel Jaakko Aatolainen is about to publish the honorary boards. There are two of them. The first board shows how the competition is carried out (the same as on the previous page) and the other one records the names of the winners. The conscripts who are trained to be snipers compete against each other in this competition. The best one has the highest score. This board will ensure the younger generations remember Simo Häyhä by name and reputation. The phrase: “Kollaa Kestää” (Kollaa holds) and its meaning will be passed on to future generations. This way they will understand more of the heroic deeds of the Finnish soldiers in the Winter War.



Simo Häyhä visiting the Heritage Room. Provincial Governor Esa Timonen, Major General Pentti Syrjä and sculptor Veikko Jalava were also present.



XO Lieutenant Colonel Jaakko Aatolainen showing Simo Häyhä the Heritage Room. The pictures of Simo and the two Honorary Boards were displayed on the left side of the weapon.



Simo Häyhä visiting the Karelian Jaeger Battalion in August 1981. He is enjoying coffee together with the executive officers of the Finnish Defense Forces; General Lauri Sutela can be seen on the right of the table. Simo is sitting in the very left corner of this photo. Simo got familiarized with the Karelian Jaeger Battalion during these visits, and they were honored by his visit.

Stage 1: Observation platform

The stage starts by the shooter climbing on a roof from where the shooter must locate a balloon hidden somewhere in the trees and hit it. The shooting distance is 175 meters and the target diameter is 20 cm. Shooting is performed from a prone position with three cartridges available. (Points 3-2-1 with highest score given for hitting with first bullet.)



Finnish conscripts who have been trained to act as snipers in time of war. They were trained to hit small targets from long distances using iron sights. Now the men have to prove themselves and what they are capable of, as they prepare to take part in the Simo Häyhä Competition for Snipers. Simo had an opportunity to participate in the competition with them. He wasn't

competing against the conscripts, though. He was shooting as a guest of honor.



Karelian Jaeger Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Jaakko Aatolainen familiarizes Simo with his old Honorary Rifle in Sotinpuro Combat Shooting Area as it is cleaned and prepared for the competition. Simo was about to get a chance to shoot long ranges with it. Behind Simo Häyhä stands Hugo Kammonen.

Stage 2: Tree trunk support

From the observation platform the contestant will move by using proper precautions and cover to next firing position. The position is standing. The next challenge is to destroy a target at 375 meters by utilizing the stump of a tree as support. Again, three cartridges are available, giving the possibility of scoring 3-2-1 respectively.



Simo Häyhä checks the balance and the sights of the honorary rifle from the standing position.



The master himself is getting prepared for the opening shot of the competition named for him (stage 1). The firing position is the roof of a building, the distance to a balloon hidden in a spruce, distance is 175 meters. He has three rounds for this task. The target has to be destroyed before he can move to the next firing position. Simo shot and the target was destroyed with the very first shot.



Simo has moved to the next firing position (stage 2). The target represents a guard or sentry and the distance is a considerable 375 meters. He is supporting the weapon on the stump. His gloves are between the stump and the rifle to suppress the jump of the weapon giving the shot a better hitting probability. He has closed his left eye and the shooting position looks calm and steady.

Stage 3: Tree support

The sniper has a firing position under the protective cover of the lower branches of a large spruce. The standing position is used, while the shooter is leaning against the tree or taking support from its lower branches. The goal is to hit the target at 370 meters. Three cartridges are available with an available score of 2-1-1.



Contrary to the rumors that have persisted for years, Simo Häyhä never shot from a tree. When I asked about it, he looked at me with a surprised expression on his face, and he asked if I was serious. To his knowledge, no sniper ever shot from a tree during the Winter War. He shot lots of enemy soldiers from under the cover of the branches of the trees as seen in this photo.

This shows his style (stage 3).

Stage 4: From under a stump with root spurs

The fourth stage firing position is under a stump with roots and requires the sniper to hit a target at 300 meters from prone position. It should be noted that the target is visible only for five periods of 5 seconds. Three cartridges are available with a score 2-1-1 available.

Stage 5: Covered foxhole

The shooting is done from the proper foxhole position. The target is set at 400 meters, three cartridges are available with available scores 3-2-2.



The master shows his method of shooting from a covered foxhole (stage 5). Note the way he has placed his gloves; they are used in the same way as earlier to reduce the jolt of the weapon. The supporting hand is behind the trigger guard to give the best possible position. Shooting from this position in the described way makes the probability of hitting the target as high as possible.

Stage 6: An infantryman's foxhole

The sniper is required to fire from the standing position in a fighting position. Target is set at 490 meters (approximately 536 yards); again three cartridges are available with available scores 3-2-2.

In theory, the maximum score could be 18 points. In reality, however, this is really difficult to achieve. It should also be noted how the scoring changes when the distance is over 400 meters.

Simo Häyhä himself participated in this competition in 1978. It is not known what his score was. Simo himself was very modest about his shooting skills and performance in this competition. More than likely, the shots he fired in this competition were of no importance for him since he had proved forty years earlier that he could hit targets that “shot back.”



Simo is congratulating the winner, Jaeger Penttinen, giving him the diploma and metal plate. The XO Lieutenant Colonel Jaakko Aatolainen is looking on while Hugo Kammonen is preparing to congratulate the winner and award him a wooden trophy.

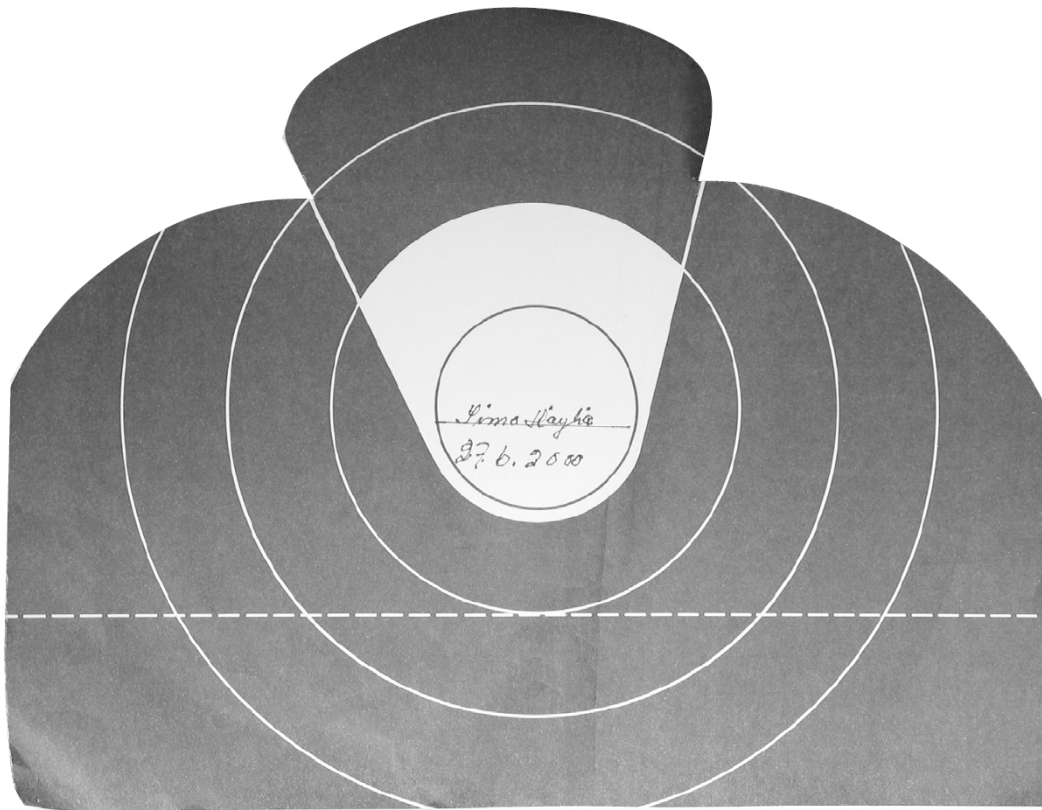
Today's sniper

At the present time, the skills of reservists and regulars are tested in sniping competitions. Targets are programmable; however, they still won't shoot back. The most famous competition is the Simo Häyhä competition organized by the Snipers' Guild (Tarkka-ampujakilta). After debating the name of the competition sometime in late 1990s, the organizers called Simo and asked if they could use his name for this Sniper's Guild Sniping Competition. Simo thought for a short while, and then gave the dry reply, "yes."

Traditionally, the Simo Häyhä Sniper's Championships have been organized by the Espoo-Kauniainen Local Troop of Snipers' Guild. The competition has been organized at various locations throughout Finland over a period of several years. Though it is a competition, it is also an event where long-range shooters and reservists meet each other, discuss the various particulars of their hobby and learn about each other's equipment and weaponry. The general arrangements and communications, as well as the professional conduct of the participants, have been an excellent example of how to conduct a safe and well-organized event.

In this contest, the sniper pairs' ability and skills are tested in various sub-categories such as camouflage, movement, range estimation and, of course, the shooting itself. There are two categories: hobbyists and military personnel. Hobbyists are further categorized to iron sight and optical sight groups. In the iron sight category, the main focus revolves around the shooting itself as the competition entails a "single person" competition from the same firing position but with two different distances. Distances in this category can reach up to 700 meters. The military category is for professionals and very serious hobbyists and reservists. This is a team challenge with distances ranging up to 1,000 meters (approximately 1,094 yards), though the majority of targets are set between 400 (437 yards) and 800 meters (875 yards).

There have also been numerous other sniper competitions on a smaller scale in Finland, a situation that will hopefully continue well into the future. Finland needs the capability and requirements to train snipers during peacetime. The knowledge and skills must continue to be stressed among the reservists, for they are ones who will face the enemy if war comes.



Target signed by Simo Häyhä. This is to remind us all of the importance of aiming with a full sight and at the center. That increases the probability of a hit, as Simo always pointed out. The most important thing in shooting is aiming. If you aim properly, you always hit. Well, he is the Master; he can put it that way.

Simo Häyhä is a name of prestige known to many people. His example has motivated countless aspiring

Finnish snipers. He became a living legend. He was very quiet and modest, preferring to mind his own business and live his own life rather than expose himself to news headlines or granting interviews to those who courted his attention. He was quite serious and particular on whom he wished to speak to and what he wanted to convey in these discussions.

Simo Häyhä's name and deeds are internationally recognized. Most snipers around the world are taught his major achievements—at the very least his score of 542 confirmed kills. In the Winter War, a small nation with a great people defended their country against a superior force in both manpower and material. The Winter War created a unique, indescribable spirit to which Simo also made a tremendous contribution; a spirit of determination that prevailed and overcame its disadvantages. In the end, Finland was neither defeated nor occupied. It maintained its independence and its democratic form of government.

Suositus tarkka ampujain käyttöön.

*Talvella jos joutui ampumaan nopeasti niin se oli tii 22-23 kukausta, ikään kuin raja, jenkamäärän pystyi hanka lyuksilla ampumaan. Senjälkeen ei * lukko tahtonut enää luistaa, ei olees eikä laaks. Lääkelahan oli palo öljy. Neuvoksi ehdoittaisin, pientä, joko muovista tai metallista kierre korkilla varustettua pientä litteää pulaa jota mies voisi dina etulinjassa ollessaan pitää mukanaan.*

Toimen ehdotukseksi olisi tuo tumma 3 senttimetrin levyinen hilma piipun päällä etu ja takatähtäimen

välillä. Ettei piipun kamitersö ilman värinä haittaisi tätä tähtäämistä.

One of the letters Simo sent to me, giving his opinion of the training of the snipers. This letter is unique. I have to point out that our conversations were not wasted; I succeeded in waking up his interest regarding this matter again. He gave me several items of advice, but this letter is one of the pieces in writing. In this letter, Simo is pointing out the significance of weapon maintenance. He suggested a sniper should carry a small bottle of kerosene with him to keep the weapon jam free. Another item of advice in this specific letter concerns a sling made of fabric which should be set above the rifle barrel in order to prevent the hot air coming up from the hot barrel. This method improves the sharpness of the aiming. Good point, indeed.



The grave of Simo Häyhä in Ruokolahti old cemetery, near the bell tower. Here rests the most famous sniper of all time. He defended Finland against the enemy and he created the Winter War spirit in 1939–1940. He survived being hit by an explosive bullet and lived a full life.

Requirements for the modern sniper

The Finnish Defense Forces observe and monitor the changing operating environment and changing requirements from time to time and adjust their training requirements accordingly. Documents may change, but the basic requirements at least will remain the same. In addition to performing the standard duties of an infantryman, a sniper must be able to estimate distances; recognize sounds and their general direction; utilize the terrain for cover against enemy fire and observation; camouflage himself, his equipment, firing position, gear and accessories; read a map and navigate in the woods at all times of the day and year; recognize, define and pinpoint enemy personnel and equipment; utilize the terrain to support one's own mission; have excellent physical strength, be able to endure pressure and remain still in a certain position for lengthy periods of time; have tremendous initiative and the independence to carry out complex missions without further instructions or supervision; and understand the basics of intelligence gathering.

KUOLLEET Maanviljelijä Simo Häyhä

Talvisodan ampujalegenda oli vaitelias mies

► Talvisodan legendaarinen tarkka-ampuja **Simo Häyhä** kuoli 1. huhtikuuta Haminassa 96-vuotiaana. Hän oli syntynyt 17. joulukuuta 1905 luovutetun Karjalan Rautjärvellä.



Viime aikansa Simo Häyhä vietti Haminassa sotaveteraanien hoitokodissa.

Häyhän isä oli talollinen, minkä ammatin myös poika valitsi. Perheen miehet harrasivat ahkeraan kalastusta ja metsästystä.

Simo Häyhä liittyi suojeluskuntaan 17-vuotiaana. Asevelvollisuutensa hän suoritti pelkupyöräpataljoonassa ja kotiutui korpraalina.

Marraskuussa 1939 puhjennessa talvisodassa Simo Häyhästä tuli Kollaan rintaman suuria sankareita. Hän sai liikanimen ”valkoinen kuolema” pettämättömän ampumataitonsa ansiosta.

Sotilastilastot ovat tavanneet lukea Häyhän erikoisajajinsa ehdottamaan kirkikaartiin. Häyhä ampui ainakin puoleentuhatta vihollista. Luku on niin suuri, että Häyhä johtaa yhä nettisivuilla julkaistua maailmantilastoa.

Simo Häyhä taisteli talvisodassa Jalkaväkirykmentti 34:n kuudennessa komppaniassa. Komppaniaa johti peloton Ma-

ronen Kauhu, kapteeni Aarne Juutilainen.

Häyhä käytti aseenaan Sakon avotähtäinkivääriä ”pystykorvaa”.

Simunaksi kutsuttu Häyhä haavoittui talvisodan lopulla, kun räjähtävä luoti osui hänen leukaansa. Sen jälkeen seurasi pitkä sairaalakierros ja leikkaukset. Leukaa korjattiin lonkasta otetulla siirännäisellä.

Vammat katsottiin niin vaikeiksi, ettei Häyhä päässyt jatkosodassa rintamalle.

Häyhä ryhtyi viljelemään uutta kotiaan Ruokolahdella ja metsästämään riistaa. Hirvestyskaverina vieraili muun muassa presidentti Urho Kekkonen.

Vaitelias Häyhä tunnettiin pitkään vain Erkki Palolammen menestyskirjasta Kollaa kestää (1940). Petteri Sarjanen onnistui kuitenkin haastattelemaan ikääntynyttä Häyhää ja tekemään hänestä elämäkertakirjan Valkoinen kuolema (1998).

Helsingin Sanomissa Häyhä sanoi viime itsenäisyyspäivänä: ”Tein sen, mitä käskettiin, niin hyvin kuin osasin.”

Marsalkka Mannerheim ylensi alikersantiksi nousseen Häyhän suoraan vänrikiksi elokuussa 1940. Kukaan toinen ei ole puolustusvoimissa yltänyt tällaiseen loikkaan.

Kollaan taistelihoilla on oma kunniamerkki, Kollaan risti. Häyhä sai hopeisen ristin numero neljä.

Riitta Heiskanen

A short obituary in major newspaper *Helsingin Sanomat*. Simo died on April 1, 2002 and the article was published a few days later.

The performance requirements for a sniper are in accordance with the permanent Finnish Order 260/Dbc/ dated March 16 1995, Appendix 4: this order is equivalent to a field manual written for soldiers.

It stipulates the general requirement to hit (with a success rate of 90%) a target with a diameter of 15 centimeters (5.91 in) or less at a range of 300 meters (328.08 yards); and a target with diameter of 30 centimeters (13.78 in) or less between 300 and 600 meters (656 yards).

In practice this means:

0–300 meters:	Headshot
300–600 meters:	Upper torso shot
600–800 meters:	Hitting a standing soldier

When comparing this to the 2003 *Finnish Sniper's Handbook*, the following similarities are also listed:

Page 12, Chapter 1.3:

A sniper is an elite soldier with the special training and equipment. He has been selected for this duty for his personal capabilities. He must be able to recognize and destroy targets which are beyond the range or means of an ordinary infantryman. A sniper operates alone or with a teammate (spotter).

A person selected to be a sniper must be:

- better than average marksman
- physically fit
- more intelligent than the average (compared to NCO selections)
- creative and adaptive
- calm and deliberate
- able to operate under pressure.

In reviewing a sniper's skills following his initial period of training, however, the standards are considerably higher,

as depicted below:

After completing the training a sniper must be able to:

- estimate changes in the surrounding combat situation
- estimate and measure distances
- understand the target classification hierarchy and draft a map of his surroundings
- use proper movement and use of terrain
- camouflage oneself and one's equipment
- use general ranger skills to sustain own operations
- identify and pinpoint various sources of sound
- understand the effects of weather and atmosphere on the bullet's trajectory
- handle one's own equipment
- master procedures with an accuracy to make recommendations of his own use for the commander of the troop being supported
- cooperate with teammate (spotter)

The general requirement for a sniper is to have a 90% success rate of hitting with the first shot:

- A stationary target with diameter of 15 cm at 300 meters
- A stationary target with diameter of 35 cm at 300–600 meters
- A target moving at under 4 m/s with diameter of 45 cm at range of under 200 meters

Above a 70% success rate of hitting:

- A target moving at speed of under 2 m/s with diameter of 40 centimeters (17.72 in) at a distance of 400 meters

An Example for Future Generations

Simo Häyhä's personal example and achievements as a sniper in combat remain unequaled in history. Over sixty years have passed since Finland experienced the horrors of war. Those Finns still living who experienced the war generally do not like to speak about it. The younger generation cannot imagine the harsh conditions and emotional stress that they endured. They ate, slept and breathed it every day; watching their comrades fight and die so that Finland could stay independent against an enemy that was both materially and numerically superior. And in so doing, they formed an honored chapter in Finnish history, a chapter that will never be forgotten.

Simo's reputation as a marksman was well known as a result of his accomplishments while serving in the Civil Guard before the war. It was a tremendous challenge for anyone to compete against him. Simo was an honest and fair sportsman who obeyed all the rules, and helped his fellow competitors if they needed advice or helpful hints. He also took good care of his physical condition. During the war, he also served as squad leader, a demanding duty of responsibility in which one's own physical and mental condition should serve as a positive example for others. Simo believed that maintaining good physical strength was vital for surviving in combat, and also helped him handle the stressful, mental challenges that came with it. In short, when Simo was in prime physical condition, his mental condition mirrored it. All in all, through his hard work, dedication and success in combat, he set an outstanding example to his fellow soldiers before, during and after the Winter War.

Simo Häyhä received his leadership training in the army, participated in countless military rehearsals and received additional training, such as sniper training, right before the Winter War began. He was well prepared. During the Winter War, he was a squad leader but spent most of his time as a sniper. His preference for the dangerous assignments of working alone earned him undisputed respect among his own troops at the front. His reputation had also reached other sections of the frontlines. Among all the Finnish soldiers of the Winter War, he was most responsible for creating the "Kollaa Holds" spirit of the Winter War.

Epilogue

The Winter War ended on March 13, 1940. Though the terms of the Moscow peace treaty were harsh, Finnish independence was saved. Finland was forced to give up 10% of its territory. The Soviet Union captured the Karelian Isthmus, areas north of Lake Ladoga, the eastern parts of Salla and Kuusamo and the Kalastajasaarento.

Moreover, Hanko was leased to the Russians for thirty years for use as a naval base. This meant that 430,000 Finns lost their homes—today they would be referred to as refugees. The Finnish losses in the Winter War were 21,396 dead, 1,434 missing and 43,557 wounded. The price to retain the Finnish independence was indeed high. One of those wounded was Simo Häyhä. The hero of Kollaa would live with his wounds for over sixty years. It was not until 1948, eight years after he was wounded, that he underwent his last bone transplant operation.

The fact that Kollaa held in the Winter War was a great miracle befitting the “Spirit of Kollaa.” One of the greatest contributors in establishing this spirit from the outset was Simo Häyhä, or Simuna, Simegg, as he was known during those days in Kollaa. In his opinion, there was but one rule to remember in battle, and that was to “Trust your buddy. Kollaa would not have held if one had not trusted his buddy.”

On occasion, Simo’s presence was detected by the Russians, who unsuccessfully tried to destroy him. Simo told me that one Russian sniper with a scoped rifle missed him by shooting too far left. His attention to detail and his immediate surroundings were such that even under fire he was able to identify how the bullet actually missed his head. In one day, he eliminated five enemy snipers on the battlefield. At times, the Russians were so angry at him that they tried to kill him with an antitank gun, even resorting to using armor-piercing bullets. There were also times when Russian snipers would be used to spot targets for their own artillery, with the result that Simo came under heavy fire. Luckily, he escaped injury on every occasion.

Simo later told me another story about utilizing war decoys:

Once our soldiers made figures out of cardboard, which were then elevated from the trenches. The enemy shot at them couple of times but soon found out that they were being cheated. Next evening they deployed the same trick.

Simo often departed on his missions earlier than his fellow soldiers, and would return after all the others as well. During the day, he stalked the Russian enemy in various positions, behind tree trunks or under fir trees, trying to avoid detection from enemy snipers. Unlike his fellow soldiers, he did not have to perform guard duty, having been granted permission to have uninterrupted sleep enabling him to awake early to continue his lonely and dangerous duty as a sniper. Despite this heavy burden of responsibility, Simo was always in a good mood. He was trusted and respected—and he knew it. After he was wounded in March 1940, his comrades at the front thought that he was dead, but as this took place near the end of the war, they soon found out about the truth. Simo kept in close contact with the Karelian Jaeger Battalion throughout his life. He was and remained the caretaker of the memory and heritage of JR 34.

Simo Häyhä celebrated his 94th birthday on December 17, 1999. Brigadier General Kari Hietanen was one of the many visitors who came to pay their respects. A ceremony in Simo’s honor was held at Hotel Saimaan Lomahovi. Here Simo was awarded the Golden Medal of National Defense on behalf of the Kymi Regional High Command. The great Finnish hero was in a good mood and in fine health. One of his relatives who was present told me that Simo hardly ever spoke about the war. Brigadier General Hietanen personally wrote a poem for Simo; the last verse, which described Simo’s wounding, was particularly touching. The poem is more or less untranslatable, but

the following gives an idea of the sense.

The Sniper

by Brigadier General Kari Hietanen,
dedicated to Second Lieutenant Simo Häyhä
on December 17, 1999

*A petit man from Karelia surfaced
Like a mushroom after a spell of forest rain
Reserved and composed
Known as Simo Häyhä*

*A steady hand
Ensures a certain hit
During the grim war winter*

*Losses grated the young soldier
Holding this country and its people so dear
Therefore he lay in the snow, under enemy fire near*

*A stranger, enemy lulled by the warmth
And safe glow of the bonfire, killed by the bullet
A countless number of hits, split skulls
Concealed shot from the winter-white forest*

*A squad in the snow with no return
The air heavy with bullets, dense with shrapnel
The horrible feeling of the hit in his head
The cheekbone tearing, the bullet exploding
Overwhelmed, swallowing red blood
Tilting his head, closing his eyes*

*Spitting blood and bone, out of breath
Not yet ready to let go of life
The pain takes over, grip of death
Now ready to go under, the dark ensues
But with the helping hand and a firm grip
The sledge moves through the forest, alley of wood to rescue*

*With a crooked mouth and one cheekbone missing,
A less composed character would be lost
But now his steady hands lift the blued rifle barrel
Ensuring certain prey for the hunter*

Tarkka-ampuja

*Metsän mailta Karjalan mies tulee pieni
kuin sateen jäljiltä ois noussut sieni.
On olemus ja luonne jäyhä
nimeä kantaa Simo Häyhä.
On hällä käsi vakaa
se osuman niin varman takaa.
Meneillään on raskas sotatalvi
menetykset mieltä nuorukaisen kalvi.
Tää maa ja kansa on niin rakas,
siks alla tulen, lumessa mies makas.*

*Mies vieras nuotiolla löysi lämmön, turvan
olon hyvän tuuditus toi luodin surman.
Joukko lukematon, keneltä pää halkee*

kätköstä laukaus, vain ympärillä luonto valkee.

*Lumessa tarpoo joukko, ei ole pakoa
ilmassa ei luodeilta ja sirpaleilta löydy rakoa.
Se kauhealta tuntuu, nyt päähän läjähtää
ja luoti posken alla repii, räjähtää.
Ahdistaa, suu täyttyy punaiseksi verellä
painuu pää, ei pysy silmä hereillä.*

*Sylkee suusta luuta sekä verta, ei enää kulje henki
ei vielä saapua saa tuonen renki.
Kaikkialla kipu kasvaa, tuntuu tuskaa
kuolema nyt tule, pois täältä kuskaa.
Viel löytyy käsi auttavainen, ote luja
ahkion eessä korpi, pitkä kuja.*

*Suu kierossa ja poski toinen puuttuu
siin luonne heikompi jo muuttuu.
Taas nousee aseensa sinertävä piippu vakaa
nyt metsämiehelle se saaliin varman takaa”*

Appendix 1

The Basics of Shooting

Sniping is based on various factors. The most important is the basic shot and its method. Once a basic shot can be repeated in the same manner, it is possible to hit the target most of the time. A shot taken by a sniper consists of the very same principles found in a usual basic shot. The main difference is that the sniper must be able to perform each shot better than the average shooter. The method for the ideal shot consists of:

- Spotting a target
- Defining the target
- Estimating the range
- Deciding the shot (to shoot or not to shoot)
- Setting the sight at the appropriate range; taking into account climatic conditions
- Pointing the weapon towards the target
- Taking a proper shooting position; supporting the weapon on its chosen and potential supporting points
- Re-estimating and re-defining the target and the general situation in a battlefield (is the shot reasonable to be shot and is it still sensible to shoot?)
- Aiming
- Pulling the trigger; keeping the weapon still after a shot and estimating the influence of the shot
- Reloading the weapon (automatically)
- Continuing sniping, if needed and if reasonable, according to the prevailing situation on the battlefield

There is little doubt that when a sniper kills his opponent, it is far more “personal.” He alone is responsible for selecting his own target. The average infantry soldier, however, shoots more or less at those targets that appear to his front. He is, thereby, forced to take up his position in a certain area. A sniper, on the other hand, is able to choose his firing position.

The basic infantryman normally does not have the proper equipment available to shoot at targets at exceptionally long range. If he tries, his accuracy is limited. Furthermore, he risks exposing his position (and unit) to the enemy needlessly. For the most part, it only serves to alert the enemy, allowing him the opportunity to seek cover and undertake countermeasures.

In long-range shooting, it is not uncommon to combine many factors simultaneously. Accordingly, the shooter must be able to:

- Take a good shooting position and maintain it (often for a long period of time)
- Aim correctly
- Breathe properly
- Take the prevailing conditions under consideration; understanding how they contribute towards the probability of a hit and making the proper adjustments accordingly.
- Make correct adjustments according to the wind
- Keep the weapon steady after the shot
- Understand proper maintenance and use of the weapon

It goes without saying that everyone should understand how to deploy these skills. Even an inexperienced shooter on the range understands how important these skills are, but it is much harder to deploy them to the level necessary

to become a marksman. In addition, it is of course much harder to implement these skills on the battlefield. For example, in war, fear is an integral factor in the life of a sniper. In addition, he must face the unpredictability of events and react accordingly. Why? Because war changes practically everything that might have been considered a constant in planning. The sniper must therefore continually reevaluate his priorities all the time, to identify the pros and cons of any given situation and act in the most appropriate manner.

War is a never-ending chain of events in which everything seems to take place simultaneously. Not surprisingly, this leaves little or no time to react. Thus, whoever is best at planning and preparing for the “unexpected” will most likely succeed. As is often the case, the victor is the one who winds up making the smallest number of errors. It also requires a tremendous ability to distance oneself from one’s actions, since killing the enemy is war’s ultimate outcome.

The sniper must have the innate ability to see beyond the horizon on the battlefield. He has to be able to predict the course of battle in order to be in the right spot at the right time; understanding there are many different ways the enemy might wage war in that area. In this way, the sniper will prolong his own life by moving to the right spot and waiting for the enemy in advance. The sniper has to be able to put himself above the situation in order to control it. He can facilitate this by planning in advance. The sniper who is most capable often has a great deal of hunting experience and knows how to perform in a number of situations. One may argue, of course, that luck plays a role too. And though I agree with this to some degree, with sniping, the one who has the most skill is the one most likely to succeed.

Appendix 2

The Impact of Fire on the Battlefield

In discussing sniping, we should be aware of the nature of shooting and those factors which affect the bullet's path. These factors concern all types of traditional ammunition that pertain to the laws of ballistics. In the following paragraphs, I will highlight those principles essential towards our understanding the most profound characteristics of sniping.

Most casualties in war are caused by indirect fire. The following statistics are rough estimates but precise enough to form an overall picture. Of the casualties caused by indirect fire, 80–85% result from artillery fire—and out of this number, 15% are killed in action while 85% are wounded. After artillery fire, mortar fire is the next cause most likely to result in casualties, with 9% of those being killed in action and 91% wounded. Shrapnels account for the single largest cause of wounding in all wars—approximately 75%.

The firepower of infantry weapons depends on a number of human factors. Fear of failure is one factor that affects the user's efficiency with infantry weapons. An artilleryman generally does not think or worry about killing his enemy personally since he does not often see his adversary, but a sniper and an infantry soldier both see their opponent and the effects made by their weapons. Understandably, overcoming this fact helps contribute to increasing the success ratio of a user's efficiency with his weapon system.

When discussing the total influence of firepower and concentrating on the effect that one single bullet offers, one must bear in mind the probability of a hit by a shrapnel and bullet. The total effect of the probability of a hit is affected by the frequency of fire and the size of a target. The effect of firepower is measured by the hits, not by the rate of fire or number of shots missed. The size of the target affects the probability of a hit, as one might realize. If one shrapnel or bullet has an energy level of 80 joules, it is considered lethal to a human being. When put into practice, an energy level of 80 joules would mean that a projectile can penetrate an inch into dry pinewood.

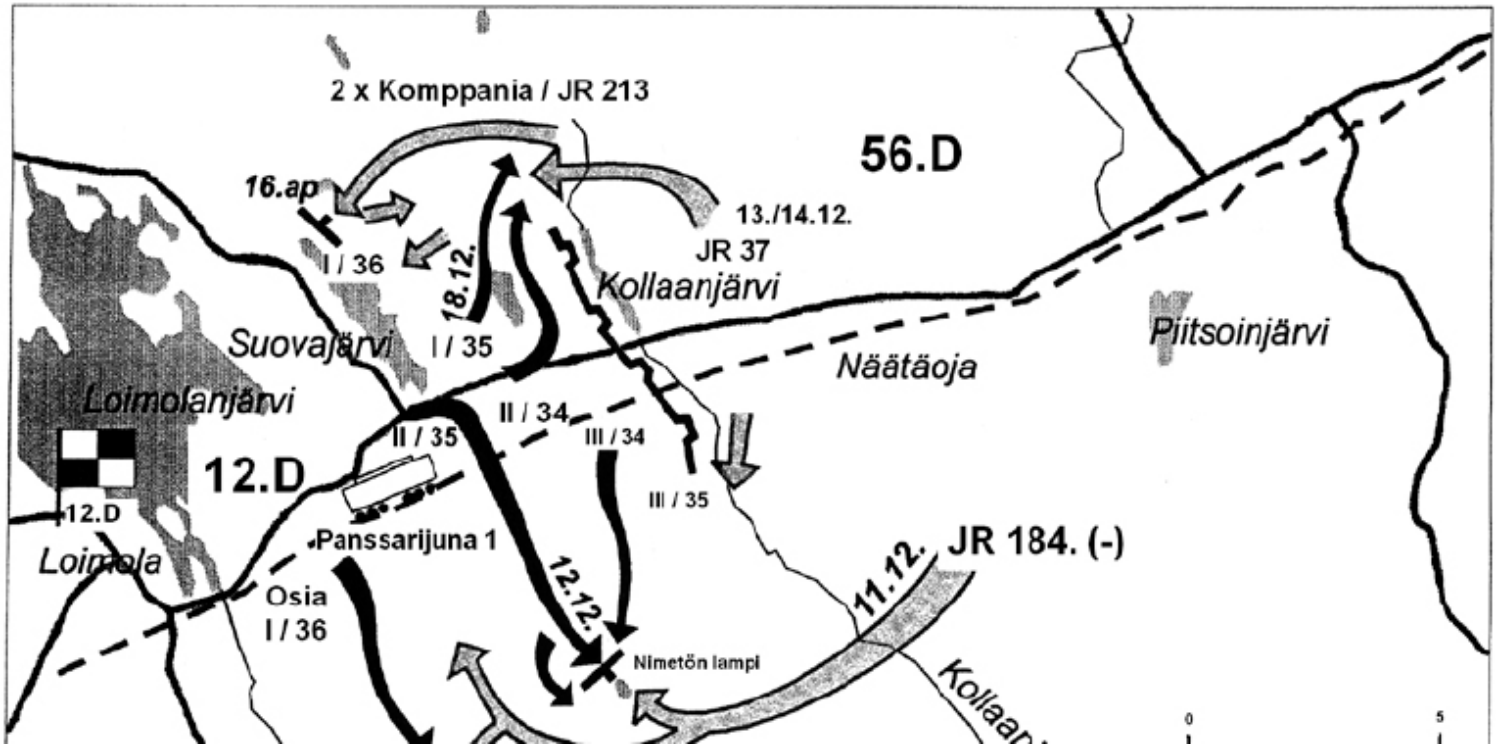
In the Winter War, the Finns had several different types of infantry rifles based on the “Mosin-Nagant” rifle. This rifle used a $7.62 \times 54R$ cartridge, the same cartridge developed for the Mosin-Nagant M/91 rifle. In both Europe and in Finland, the cartridge was known as the $7.62 \times 53R$ and was lethal up to 2,000 meters (2,187 yards). The bullet used in this weapon was the D 166 and weighed 13 grams (200 grains). In the following paragraphs, we will learn about the probability of a hit with this bullet. The observations made are based on a large series of field tests carried out by the Finnish Army in the early 1960s and have not altered over the years, although the weapons and soldiers have.

One must remember that the overall dispersion of a weapon is the sum of the dispersion caused by the cartridge and the weapon itself. The biggest dispersion is caused by the shooter in several ways—such as pulling the trigger improperly or closing the eyes before gently pulling the trigger. It is imperative to keep the weapon steady after gently pulling the trigger to hit the target.

The picture below indicates those mistakes made either in aiming or trigger pull at a distance of 100 meters (109 yards). The inner circle indicates 50% of aiming errors, while the outer circle indicates trigger pull or other mistakes. Well-trained shooters make few mistakes in pulling the trigger due to aiming errors. Shooters, however, who are inexperienced, are less prone to make aiming mistakes when applying this procedure. Mistakes made in pulling the trigger are far worse as they at least double the dispersion. In conclusion, aiming practice does not make a good shooter. However, training that emphasizes better trigger pull is more effective. Though this can be accomplished easily enough in a classroom setting, the only place where it is possible to truly verify success or

failure is on the shooting range.

The drawing on the left: a poorly trained shooter or novice. The picture indicates the differences between well-trained marksmen and inexperienced ones. This fact can be seen as a smaller number in dispersion, as seen in the drawing on the right.



When the weapon functions correctly and is properly maintained, the dispersion of this tool is about 1 centimeter at 100 meters. The dispersion caused by the ammunition is much larger. Of course, this depends on the cartridge used and its characteristics. Furthermore, the dispersion is larger based upon the shooter. Proper training is a key in decreasing dispersion, but it requires far more than research and development work invested in weaponry and ammunition. Responsibility for improvement solely rests with the shooters.

The usual “good shooter” can achieve an approximate aim in dispersions such as 0.25 milliradians at horizontal level and 0.5 milliradians at vertical level—2.5 cm horizontally and 5.0 cm vertically.

When we compare a marksman with a trainee, the differences can be multiplied by four at the start. These results are measured for training purposes only on a shooting range. Under such circumstances, the fear factor is not present, nor is the target shooting back.

Once engaged in battle, the dispersion of fire is far greater than just described. It is estimated that 50% of all good shooters achieve a dispersion of 20 cm at 100 meters. Average shooters, on the other hand, have a dispersion of 60 cm at 100 meters.

The human factor is the single most important factor on the probability of a hit on a target both in peacetime conditions and in war. One has to bear in mind that the dispersion increases depending on the shooting distance: for example, when shooting at a distance of 300 meters, the dispersion can be 30 centimeters; while at 400 meters, it can be 40 centimeters. This is normally the case with a good shooter. For an average or poor shooter, we have to multiply the results depending on the shooting distances. This is just one example. The probability of a hit also tends to decrease in combat due to bad visibility caused by smoke, explosions, shadows, reflections or darkness.

As Simo Häyhä often highlighted when interviewed, range estimation was the key factor in determining success or failure as a sniper. In his view, a sniper had to be able to determine the shooting distance as precisely as possible. During his time, sniper’s estimated ranges without the aid of optical devices or laser rangefinders; therefore, if the distance was measured or estimated poorly, the outcome was a miss. Since Simo Häyhä understood this, he tried to minimize problems by taking proper aim at the central mass of the target whether he was firing on the range or in combat. In his view, if his estimated distance was inaccurate, he would still hit the target somewhere. This reasoning remains applicable to this day. The accurate fire is still that in which a single round is able to hit its target and eliminate it for good.

The average mistake an individual makes when estimating shooting ranges is normally calculating 20% of the true distance. On short ranges, such as 200 meters or less, this rule generally does not apply. To equate this information into numbers, the following errors can be established: 15 cm at 200 meters; 25 cm at 300 meters; 50 cm at 400 meters; and 105 cm at 500 meters! One can understand now why range estimation is such a crucial skill. If the situation on a battlefield allows, one should estimate or measure shooting distances at least using features in the landscape.

In the Finnish Army, the majority of snipers are trained on a weapon using the $7.62 \times 53R$ round; thus they must pay a great deal of attention in estimating ranges or else they will not be useful. The type of bullet remains the D166. The average speed of the bullet is approximately 705 m/s, according to the weapon and ammunition used. Of course, there are minor variations in both the mass and velocity of the bullet in the muzzle of the weapon. Whatever those values are, the basics of sniping remain all the same. The bullet is powerful enough to knock down a soldier for good.

According to the following tables, the bullet's velocity is estimated as 720 m/s at the muzzle. This is a military rifle chambered with the previously mentioned $7.62 \times 53R$, loaded with a D166 boat-tail bullet that weighs 200 grains (13 grams). One has to bear in mind that the accuracy and velocity of each rifle is individual. Characteristics shown in this book and following tables are calculated with a computer and ballistic programs. Therefore, the perspective here is theoretical and equivalent to laboratory setting.

Take, for example, a sniper spots an enemy sniper 80 cm above ground level in his fighting position. The actual range to the enemy sniper is precisely 650 meters. Our sniper estimates the range 29 meters too short, calculating 621 meters. What happens is as follows: the bullet hits the ground 29 meters in a front of the enemy sniper. Most likely, the bullet will ricochet off the ground, never hitting the hostile target. Conversely, if our sniper estimates the range to be 675 meters, his bullet will pass the enemy's head by 1 centimeter, hitting the terrain 53 meters behind the target. In both examples, the enemy sniper remains unharmed but our sniper is now in danger of being spotted and killed.

In another example, using an open-sighted weapon, the enemy's head was spotted 30 cm above ground level at a distance of 300 meters. Our sniper, however, estimates the range as 400 meters, sets his sight accordingly and shoots. The bullet misses the enemy's head by 35 centimeters and enemy remains unharmed, while our sniper could be in trouble, if spotted.

Table 1 shows the effect of windy conditions on shooting. The numbers are computer-calculated estimates, not actual and precise numbers that match every single weapon chambered for this cartridge.

The velocity of the bullet is 720 m/s, its type is the D166 and it weighs 13 grams.

Hitting a moving target is much more challenging and difficult. The target lead is seen in Table 2. The calculated parameters remain the same.

The parameters shown below are calculated using the Quick Load Ballistics-Program.

In addition to errors made in range estimation, the dispersion of the round is also caused by the altering weather conditions. Roughly speaking, the rise in air pressure and shooting upwind will take down the bullet; whereas the raising of temperature and following wind will take the bullet up. A strong side wind to the bullet's path causes much dispersion. It is roughly estimated that 10 m/s wind takes the bullet to the opposite direction of the wind according to the following shooting distances: 100 meters in shooting distance takes the bullet 100 mils and 200 meters as 200 mils. Of course, the temperature and variations in the air will result in dispersion. The moisture in the atmosphere also causes dispersion, the impact of which is noticed at a shooting distances up to 300 meters.

Table 1

		Shooting distance (m)							
		100	150	200	300	400	500	600	700
Crosswind speed (m/s)	1	1.0	1.5	2.5	6.0	11.0	18.0	27.0	38.0
		cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm
	3	2.0	4.0	7.0	17.0	33.0	53.0	80.0	113.0
		cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm
	5	3.0	7.0	12.0	29.0	55.0	89.0	133.0	188.0
		cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm

Table 2

		Shooting distance (m)							
		100	150	200	300	400	500	600	700
Velocity	1	0.15 m	0.22 m	0.33 m	0.5 m	0.7 m	0.9 m	1.1 m	1.4 m
of target	3	0.4 m	0.7 m	0.9 m	1.4 m	2.0 m	2.6 m	3.3 m	4.0 m
(m/s)	5	0.7 m	1.1 m	1.5 m	2.4 m	3.3 m	4.4 m	5.5 m	6.7 m

It's essential to remember the influence of temperature changes inside the cartridge. For a high hit probability, it is essential to keep the ammunition protected against cold weather. When the temperature of the powder decreases, some of the energy of the gunpowder is spent warming up the powder during the burning process. In this process, the energy consumption of the gunpowder is lost. It has been calculated that with the $7.62 \times 53R$ cartridges, -0.8 degrees Celsius will decrease the velocity of the bullet one meter per second. In other words, the temperature correlation is 0.8 m/s per Celsius. This formula pertains to warm weather conditions as well, where the speed of a bullet speed increases according the same formula.

In years past, marksman used the following guidelines: an alteration in temperature by 10 degrees Celsius will cause a deviation in the bullet's path from a distance of 500 meters. When shooting from a distance, a side wind with a strength of 10 meters per second blowing along the same line as the bullet will cause a deviation of 10 centimeters. And when a change in air pressure is 10 mmHg, it will cause a deviation in the bullet's path of 6 centimeters at the same distance. As you see, these changes are only marginal. They are insignificant compared to the dispersion caused by the shooter!

Today, we know much more. When the temperature correlation of powder is 0.8 m/s per Celsius, the effect can be calculated, as in Table 3—here the weapon is zeroed while the temperature is at 20 degrees Celsius. This table is just an example and will not be valid for all weapons due to the significant nature of a firearm.

Table 3

	Shooting distance (m)						
		100	200	300	400	500	600
Temperature (°C)	+20	0.0 cm	0.0 cm	0.0 cm	0.0 cm	0.0 cm	0.0 cm
	-10	-1.0	-4.0	-10.0	-20.0	-37.0	-66.0
		cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm
	-20	-1.0	-6.0	-18.0	-36.0	-68.0	-116.0
		cm	cm	cm	cm	cm	cm

The rifling inside the barrel causes the bullet to both spin and stabilize. The rifling can be either to the right or left hand side; therefore, it's important for the shooter to know the direction of the rifling, for when he shoots at long ranges (over 500 meters), the bullet will eventually start travelling in the direction of the rifling. But as the reader most likely knows, the significance of this factor disappears in the total dispersion caused by the shooter!

The circulation of a bullet is represented as centimeters per the center line of the bore. The numbers in Table 4 are only estimates and applicable to the $7.62 \times 53R$ rifle shooting D166 bullets at a velocity of 720 meters per second.

One must bear in mind that only well-trained shooters generally take into consideration changes in weather conditions. Despite, however, their best estimates in adjusting to such conditions, they do not have the proper equipment readily available to measure changes in the atmosphere.

In short, alterations in the weather roughly cause approximately 5% dispersion in the vertical direction of the round. In different shooting distances, this comes up as follows: at 200 meters, the error is 4 centimeters; at 300 meters, the error is 6 centimeters; at 400 meters, the error is 12 centimeters; and at 500 meters, the error is 26 centimeters.

Probable total error is calculated when we sum up all errors in three major areas: aiming and trigger-pull, range estimation and weather changes. When summed up, we gain 200 meters/25 centimeters; 300 meters/40 centimeters; 400 meters/65 centimeters; and 500 meters/120 centimeters.

Table 4

Shooting distance (m)	100	200	300	400	500	600	700	800
Circulation of bullet (cm)	0	1	2	3.5	5	9	13	17

When sniping, it is essential to hit your target with the first shot. When we compare the average shooter to a well-trained marksman, the statistics speak for themselves when we monitor the dispersion of the rounds. Let us assume, for example, that under good weather conditions, both shooters take aim at the center of a target measuring 0.4×0.5 meters at a distance of 400 meters. With the sniper, using open sights (iron sights), he will in all probability hit the target 8% of the time. This means that out of twelve shots, he will hit the target with one round. The average shooter, however, has a hitting probability of 0.8% which means it takes 120 rounds for him to hit the target one time. When we reduce the distance to 100 meters, the odds of hitting the target increase to 75% and 14% respectively. In other words, out of four shots, the sniper will hit his target three times; while the average shooter will take 21 shots to hit the target three times.

To conclude, one trained shooter is equivalent to 10 non-trained shooters at a distance of 400 meters. When talking about a shooting distance of 100 meters, one trained shooter is equivalent to five.

Table 5 pulls together all this information to give the number of rounds needed for a certain hit by an average shooter.

When we examine all the factors when shooting at a moving target, however, we have an even greater challenging situation. One must not only be able to estimate the distance to the target but the velocity and angle as well. For example, if we use a $7.62 \times 53R$ rifle and shoot at a target moving 100 meters per minute (or normal walking speed), the target lead will be 22 centimeters. At 200 meters, the target lead is 48 centimeters; at 400 meters, it is 80 centimeters and at 600 meters, the target lead is 183 centimeters.

Table 5

	Shooting distance (m)		
	100	200	300
Standing man	1 shot	2 shots	3.2 shots
Man in the ground	5 shots	10 shots	16 shots
Man in the foxhole	10 shots	20 shots	32 shots

Simo Häyhä did not have these tables available to him during the war, nor the information they contained. He was a hunter and a sniper, not a mathematician. What he knew, he knew by heart. He had that unique ability to accurately estimate these variations just described with calm deliberation. Furthermore, he was a master at reading the terrain and knowing how to utilize it to his own advantage when stalking the Russian enemy.

Yet, it wasn't enough for Simo to simply shoot at the enemy on the battlefield. All soldiers are trained to do that in combat. As a professional sniper, however, Simo's life depended on his ability to keep his mind calm, steady and under control as well, regardless how many times concentrated enemy hostile fire landed close to his position or when he went up against Russian snipers. Throughout such ordeals, he had to clearly evaluate the general situation on the battlefield; rapidly estimate ranges, choose his target, steadily aim and then kill his opponent. And he did this repeatedly with extraordinary success.

In conclusion, when the reader takes into account all the facts described in this work, Simo Häyhä's accomplishments are truly staggering. During the winter of 1939–1940 he, along with countless other Finns, fought not only for their own lives, but struggled against unbelievable odds to preserve the very existence of their beloved nation. Though they fought under unbelievable pressure, they persevered; ensuring that Finland remains a free and vibrant nation to this day. If ever you pause to remember the actions of these resolute warriors from a bygone era in Finnish history, never forget how this humble but deadly Finnish soldier answered his nation's call without complaint. He was a hero in the truest sense of the word, yet never sought the public limelight. When you think about all the accolades he is entitled to, this one perhaps best embodies the kind of a person he really was. I will miss him a great deal.

Appendix 3

The Battles on the Kollaa Front during the Winter War

This appendix describes the major events that took place on the Kollaa Front during the Winter War.

The chain of command on the Kollaa Front

The IV Finnish Army Corps was responsible for defending the sector between Lake Ladoga and Koitere. The 12th Finnish Division was part of IV Finnish Army Corps. The jaeger regiments (JR) of the 12th Division were organized as follows: JR 34 was established in the city of Sortavala, JR 35 in the city of Savonlinna, JR 36 in the city of Joensuu, Light Section 12 in the area of Joensuu-Savonlinna and Artillery Regiment 12 in the area of Savonlinna-Jaakkima-Onttola. The Military District of Karelia was responsible for establishing the 12th Division. In the Army Corps of the Fourth Finnish Army, the 13th Division was established by the Savo Military District. The strength of the Finnish Army Corps was approximately 40,000 soldiers and commanded by General W. Hägglund. He began his assignment on December 4, 1939. The Finnish 12th Division was first commanded the Colonel Tiainen. Beginning on February 2, 1940, it was commanded by Colonel Svensson. The Finnish 13th Division was commanded by Colonel Hannuksela.

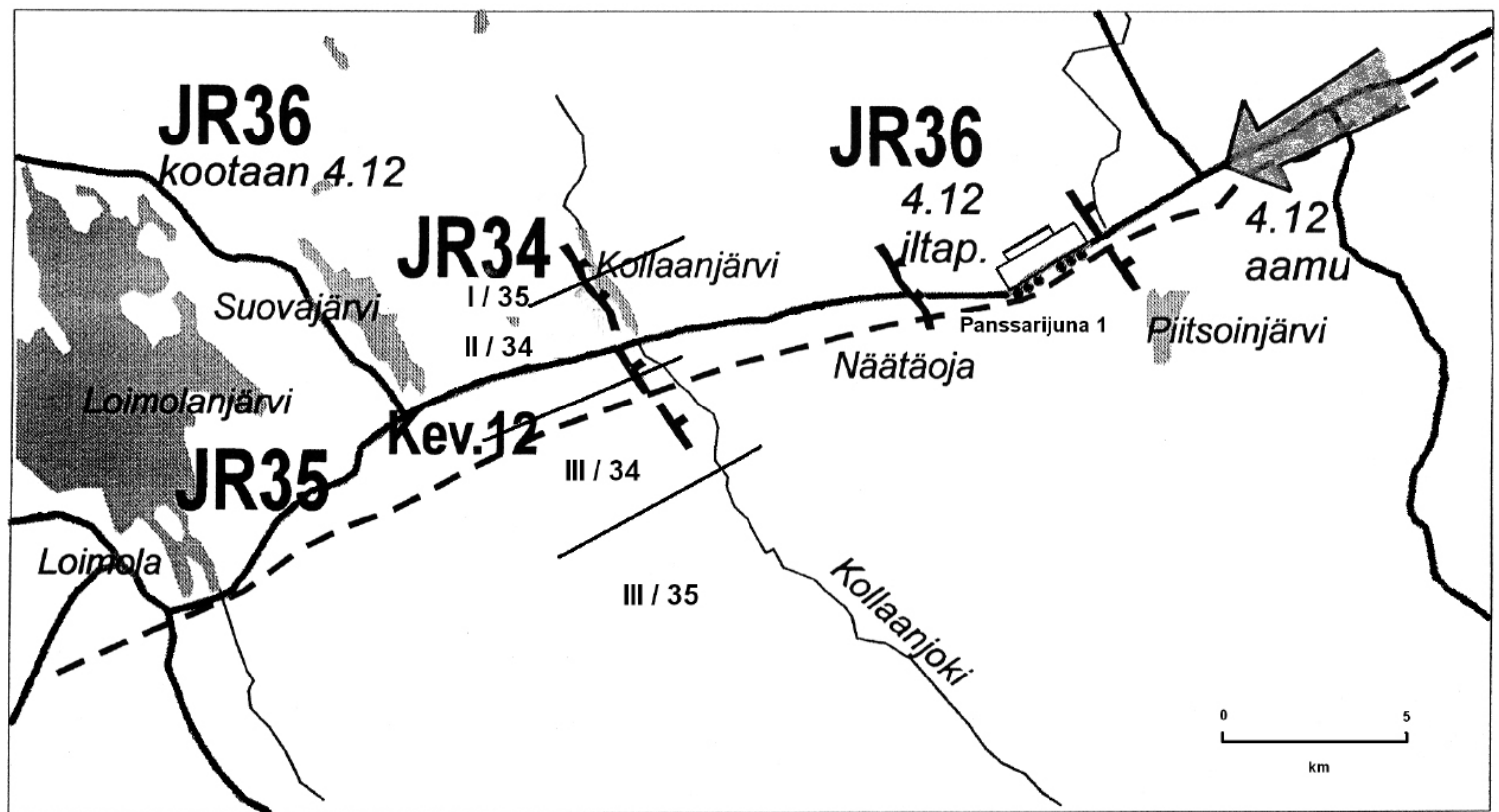
The mission of the Finnish Army Corps

The mission of the Finnish Army Corps was to intercept and repel Russian attacks in the area between Lake Ladoga and Uimaharju. It was also tasked to halt Russian attacks along the line of Jänisjoki-Jänisjärvi-Korpiselkä-Uimaharju.

Russian forces and objective

The Russian 8th Army was located in the area between Lake Ladoga and Porajärvi. It comprised six divisions: the 18th, 56th, 75th, 139th, 155 and 168, and two tank brigades. In total, the Russian 8th Army strength was approximately 120,000 soldiers, 400 armored vehicles, close to 600 artillery pieces and approximately 100 aircraft.

The Russian objective was to attack from the direction of the roads to the west. Their main objective was the Karelian railroad and the line Sortavala-Korpiselkä. The Russian goal was to carry on the attack on the flanks of the Karelian defenders or towards inner Finland. The continuous attack plan would be issued later on, depending on the outcome of the battle. Towards every road crossing along the border line, the Russian approached in divisions. On the Kollaa Front, this was the Russian 56th Division. Its objective was Loimola. Its continuation mission was to carry on the attack towards the villages of Suistamo and Värtsilä.



The battles from the Piitsinoja to the Näätäoja on December 4 and 5, 1939.

Delaying Battles: December 3–7, 1939

December 2, 1939

I/JR 34 were stationed at Saarijärvi, about 20 km south of Kollaa. About 20 km west of Kollaa, II and III/JR 34 were positioned west of the River Kollaa. I/JR 34 were positioned at Loimola. II and III/JR 34 were positioned east of Loimola. I/JR 36 were positioned at Piitsoinjärvi, about 15 km east from Kollaa while Light Section 12 was positioned at Suovanjärvi, about 5 km west from Kollaa. Artillery Regiment 12 was emplaced in the Kollaa region ready to support its troops with indirect fire.

December 3, 1939

II and III/JR 36 attacked towards the east, their objective being Suvilahti, about 30 km east from Kollaa. In the region of Malttina, about 20 km east from Kollaa, it was engaged by Russian tanks. Panic ensued among the Finnish defenders and they pulled back to the west. II and III/JR 36 took defensive positions at Piitsinoja. I/JR 36 took its place as the reserve for JR 36 west of Näätäoja, about 5 km east from Kollaa.

December 4, 1939

Russians attacked at Piitsinoja, which resulted in a rumor spreading among the Finns that Russians had broken through with the tanks. Because of this rumor, II/JR 36 and part of III/JR 36 disengaged from the battle and moved towards Loimola. JR 34 occupied the positions along the western front from the river Kollaa.

December 5, 1939

Battle Group Luikki (Light Section 12, Armored Train 1 and 7. /JR 34) attacked towards Piitsinoja. At Näätäoja, they were engaged with the 56th Russian Division.

December 6, 1939

III/JR 35 attacked in the direction of the railroad towards the east and engaged Russian troops at Näätäjoki. 9. /JR 34 also engaged Russian troops. The attack was stopped at around 1300 hrs.

December 7, 1939

II/JR 35 took its positions at Kollaa while II/JR 34 took up position in the rear. Just before midnight, the Russians were engaged with Finnish troops near the river Kollaa. JR 34 suffered the loss of only 105 soldiers. The small losses were due to the fact that JR 34 had already fought earlier at Suvilahti and Suojärvi; thus it was more experienced and better understood Russian tactics.

Defensive battles: December 8, 1939–January 18, 1940

Southern sector

December 12, 1939

The observation that two Russian companies were moving towards the south-east was made west of the Joutsenlampi, about 7 km south-east from Kollaa. Consequently, Finnish companies headed towards the north. At noon, the Russians were stopped at an unnamed pond by a Finnish bicycle company from Light Section 12, a separate Civil Guard platoon and the 9th Company from Jaeger Regiment 34. The armored train moved to the station at Mustakallio, about 5 km west of Kollaa. I/JR 36 were moved south from the station at Mustakallio. A Russian detachment was observed in the region of Vesisuo, about 5 km south-west from Kollaa, at around noon.

December 13, 1939

II/JR 35 arrived at Vesisuo. It followed the tracks of the Russian troops and moved west. A company from I/JR 36 was in position in front of the Russians at Vesisuo. By noon, the battle remained unresolved. The Russians, however, were stopped and took up defensive positions.

December 15, 1939

Two Russian companies were spotted in the region of Vesisuo heading towards the railroad. I/JR 36 encircled one of the companies.

December 16, 1939

The Russian company encircled at Vesisuo capitulated in the morning.

Middle sector

December 7, 1939

The Russians were spotted at Koivujärvi, about 3 km south-east of Kollaa. III/JR 35 was ordered to that area.

December 8, 1939

Detachment Teittinen was established (II and III/JR 34, II and III/JR 35 and I/Artillery Regiment 12). Reconnaissance troops provided information that the Russians were building a bridge over the river Kollaa, south of Koivujärvi. III/JR 35 secured the area.

December 9, 1939

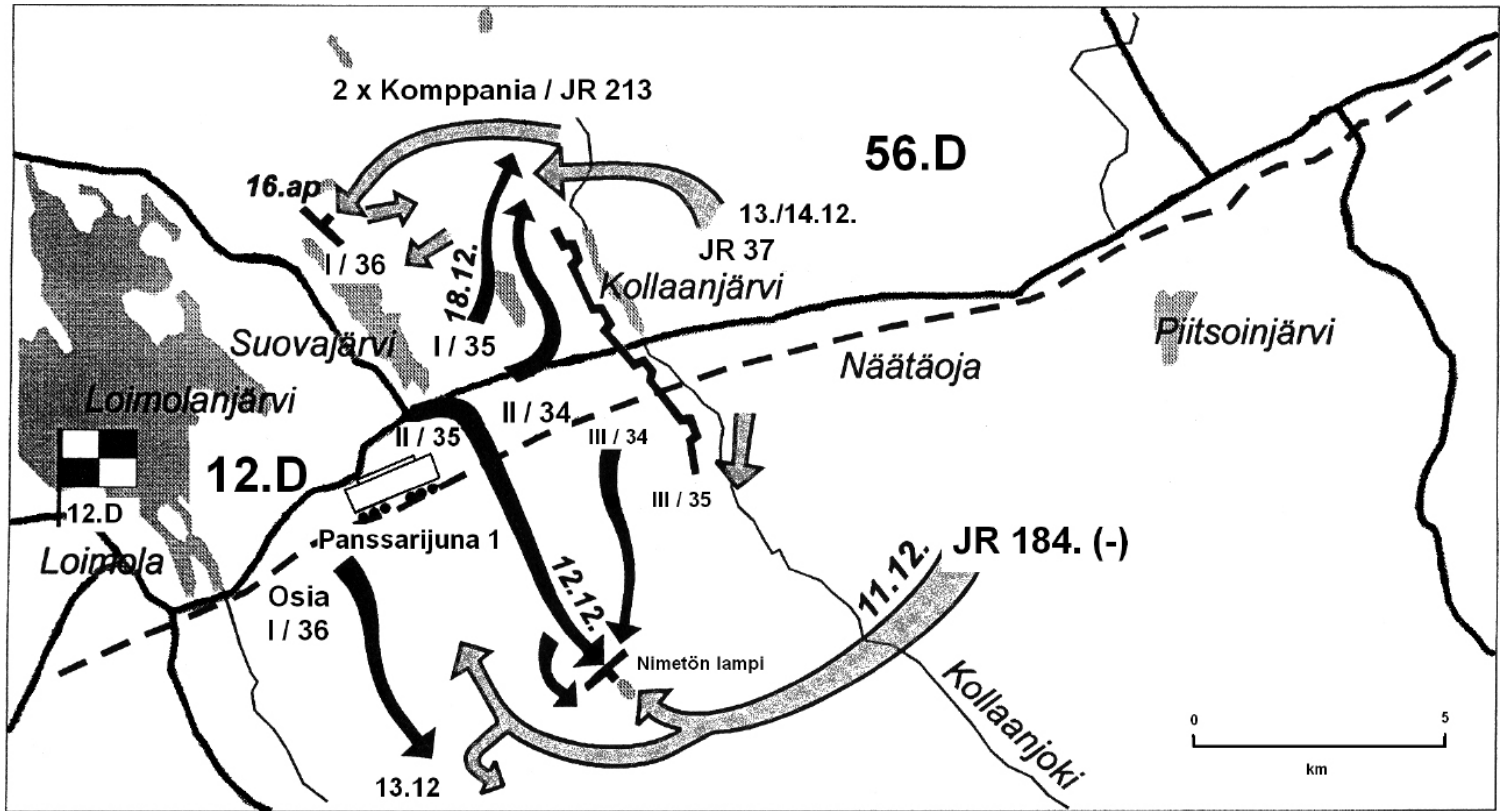
II/JR 34 repelled the Russian attack. Reconnaissance provided information that fresh Russian troops—Battalions 184 and 213—were arriving, leading to the conclusion that the entire 56th Russian Division had arrived in the area.

December 10, 1939

II and III/JR 34 were under continuous Russian attacks. The center of gravity was the road. III/JR 35 took its defending positions on the west bank of the river Kollaa.

December 14, 1939

6. /JR 34 attacked east from the river Kollaa with its CO, Lieutenant Juutilainen, commanding his troops at the front towards the road. The company destroyed five enemy tanks and captured two antitank guns, three machine guns and many light infantry weapons. After the battle, a heavy outpost was established by the Finns on the east side of river Kollaa to prevent the Russians from surprising the Finns from that direction.



The battles on the Kollaa Front and its flanks, December 11 to 18, 1939.

Northern sector

December 13, 1939

At Mäntyjärvi, about 3 km north-east of Kollaa, the Russian camp was discovered. They were outflanking the Finns.

December 14, 1939

II/JR 34 was moved to secure the north side of Lake Kollaa. Finnish artillery shelled the located Russian camp. The light bicycle company from Light Section 12 and the Civil Guard Platoon moved towards the north.

December 15, 1939

I/JR 35 were responsible for the front from Petäjäjärvi (about 3 km north-west of Kollaa) to Joutsenpesänlampi (about 7 km north-west of Kollaa). III/JR 34 was responsible for the front from Petäjäjärvi to Kollaanjärvi.

December 16, 1939

Russians moved towards the south from Joutsenpesänlampi while II/JR 35 moved to the north.

December 17, 1939

Russians withdrew their troops east of Lake Kollaa. II/JR 35 moved to Kitilä under the command of the 13th Division.

December 18, 1939

The Kollaa Front was firmly in the hands of the Finns.

Note: Through such operational maneuvers, the Russians tried to overwhelm this theater of operations. In the

north was Battalion 213 and in the south, Battalion 184.

Events in the middle sector until the end of February 1940

December 16, 1939

Russians re-formed and established their positions.

December 17, 1939

The area between Koivujärvi to Joutsenlampi was free from Russian forces all the way to Näätäsoo.

December 18, 1939

II/JR 35 tried unsuccessfully to roll up Russian positions north of Koivujärvi due to heavy resistance.

December 20, 1939

III/JR 35 took up blocking positions in the south together with II/JR 35 from the north. As no action took place, III/JR 35 returned to its former position the following day.

December 23, 1939

The Finns issued fresh orders to commence new attacks. Elements of II/JR 34 carried out an attack to the north. III/JR 35 reached Näätäsoja and observed the road. I/JR 35 approached to 200 meters from the road. All attacking troops returned in the evening.

December 24, 1939

Russian troops made two attacks in the direction of the railroad.

January 5, 1940

III/JR 34 and III/JR 35 rolled-up Russian positions to the north.

January 6, 1940

The assault of III/JR 34 and III/JR 35 was interrupted.

January 14, 1940

Battle Group Räiskä established. From January 25, 1940 onwards, it was known as Battle Group Hai (Shark). It was established from the following units that served on Kollaa Front: Headquarters/JR 34, II and III/JR 34, I and III/JR 35. This battle group was responsible for defending the Kollaa river. The XO, Lieutenant Colonel H. Kinnunen, was a commander of JR 35.

January 17, 1940

The coldest day of the Winter War: −42 degrees Celsius.

January 18, 1940

Credible information regarding the location of the Russian 2nd Division provided by intelligence sources from Petrilampi, about 7 km south-east from Kollaa. In addition, elements of the Russian 164th Division were spotted.

January 19, 1940

The Russians began to put more effort into reconnaissance. For example, Finnish troops observed a Russian hot-air surveillance balloon in the vicinity of Näätäsoja.

January 21, 1940

Russians commenced attacks alongside the road.

January 22, 1940

Russians became active on the flanks.

January 24, 1940

I/JR 35 lost one of its bases to the Russians.

January 25, 1940

Finns recaptured their lost base.

February 3, 1940

Russians moved towards the west from Ahvenlampi, about 7 km north of Kollaa. Finnish Ranger Detachment at Sissiosasto and the Reserve Battalion from the 12th Division were moved towards the enemy. Russians withdrew.

February 9, 1940

JR 69 arrived at Loimola.

February 17, 1940

Corporal Simo Häyhä was awarded the Honorary Rifle.

February 17–18, 1940

I/JR 69 took over responsibility of the front line from III/JR 34.

February 18–19, 1940

II/JR 69 took over responsibility of the front line from II/JR.

February 19–20, 1940

III/JR 69 took over responsibility of the front line from I/JR 35.

Decisive battles

At the end of February 1940, the Russians concentrated additional troops—128th and 75th Division—in the area to force a breakthrough.

March 2, 1940

The Russian 56th and 164th Divisions attacked Finnish troops by the River Kollaa. The Headquarters Reserve, JR 34, arrived in this area while I/JR 35 attacked towards Ahvenlampi, approximately 7 km north from Kollaa.

March 3, 1940

Positions remained in the vicinity of Ahvenlampi. Along the road, the Russians broke through the lines of JR 69 area at noon. By the end of the evening, however, the situation improved as the Russians fled or were destroyed.

March 8, 1940

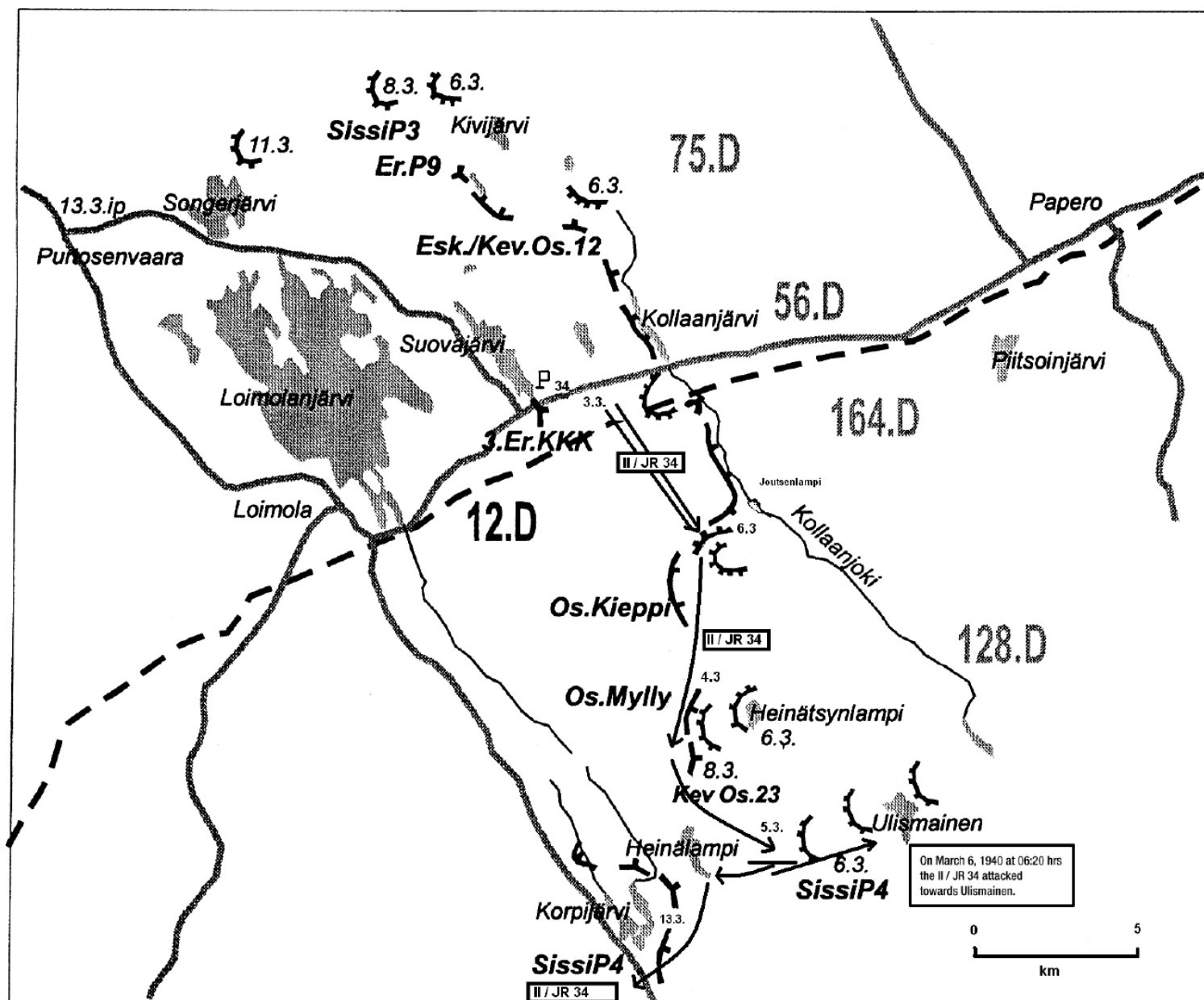
Breakthrough made by II/JR 69, located between the road and railroad. By the end of the evening, the situation was good. The main positions were again captured by Finnish troops.

March 9, 1940

Troops of the Russian 164th Division made several breakthroughs on the both sides of the railroad against I/JR 69. Base 4, on the south side of the railroad, was lost. By midnight, however, both the main line and Base 4 had been seized from the Russians. 6. /JR 36 arrived with Light Section 12 and Armored Train 1 to Loimola.

March 10, 1940

The Russians attacked along the railroad.



The battles on the Kollaa Front, March 1 to 13, 1940 and the situation at the end of war.

March 11, 1940

The Russians continued to attack repeatedly along the railroad. Bases closest to them were lost on both sides of the railroad. The Russians were so strong that these bases were permanently lost.

March 12, 1940

The defensive lines of II/JR 69 began to crack along the direction of the road. The XO of the 12th Division decided to give up the defensive line of the river Kollaa. During the evening, the Russians gained a breakthrough against Finnish defensive positions in the direction of the railroad. Along the direction of the road, however, the breakthrough was restricted.

March 13, 1940

During the night, the Finnish 12th Division prepared to counterattack as it now had II/JR 64 and the Light Bicycle Battalion as an additional force. Peace, however, came during the morning hours.

Battles in the southern sector

March 2, 1940

The Russians attacked from the south-east against positions held by III/JR 35 at Koivujärvi, about 3 km south-east of Kollaa and at Joutsenlampi, about 7 km south-east of Kollaa. The attacks were repelled. At Kotajärvi, the Russian 128th Division was observed heading south-east. It crossed the river Kollaa by the end of February and advanced forward in two wedge formations 5 km apart. The southern formation captured the base of Ranger Battalion 4 at Lake Ulismainen, about 15 km south of Kollaa.

March 3, 1940

Ranger Battalion 4 tried to seize back its base from the Russians without success.

March 6, 1940

II/JR 34, Ranger Battalion 4 and Light Section 23 attacked towards Ulismaa. The attack was stopped by noon due to heavy Russian resistance. Simo Häyhä received a severe head wound, caused by an explosive bullet shot at close range.

March 7, 1940

I/JR 64 arrived at Korpijärvi, about 20 km south of Kollaa.

March 8, 1940

III/JR 34, Ranger Battalion 4 and Light Section 23 took up positions east of Korpijärvi. The Russians attacked daily west of Heinätsynlampi until the truce came. III/JR 34 repelled the Russian attacks. III/JR 35 kept its positions in the Vesisuo area.

March 12, 1940

The Russians attacked west from Korpijärvi. The head of its column reached the Loimola–Saarijärvi road.

March 13, 1940

Peace. Simo Häyhä regained consciousness in Kinkomaa Hospital (near Jyväskylä, central Finland).

Battles in the north sector

March 5, 1940

The Russians moved towards the area of Ahvenlammit–Kivijärvi, about 8 km south of Kollaa. III/JR 69, Light Section 12 and I/R 35 were responsible for defending this area.

March 6, 1940

The Russians moved towards the Huosiuskangas, about 10 km south of Kollaa.

March 7, 1940

I/JR 35 left the theater from the hills of Tshmeika, about 8 km north of Kollaa. There was no securing force in this direction.

March 7, 1940

I/JR 64 arrived at Korpijärvi, about 20 km south of Kollaa.

March 8, 1940

Ranger Battalion 3 attacked at Tshmeikka but failed.

March 9, 1940

The Russians moved on from Tshhmeikka to the west.

March 10, 1940

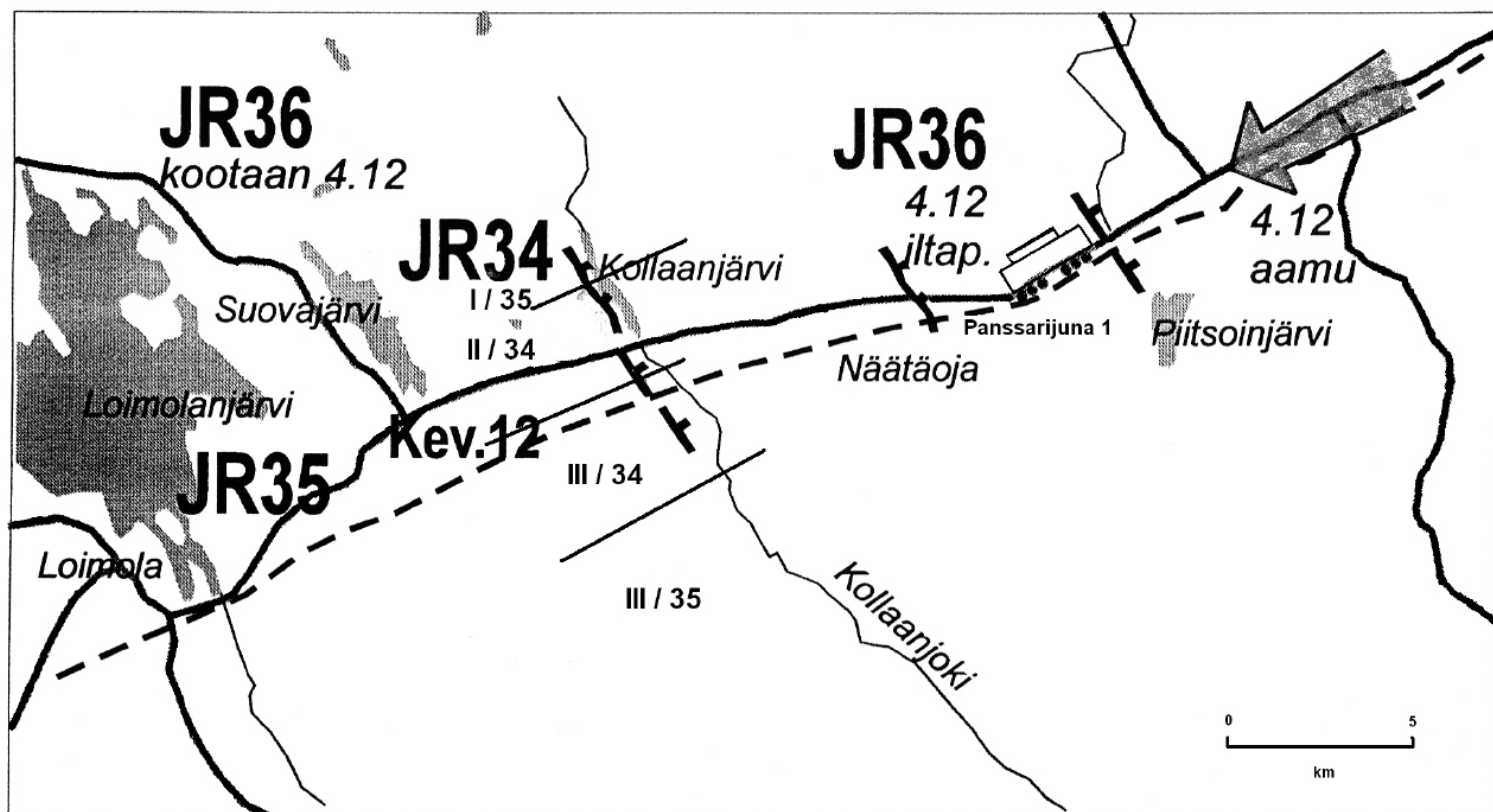
The Russians were spotted at Onkamonsuo, about 8 km south-west of Kollaa.

March 11, 1940

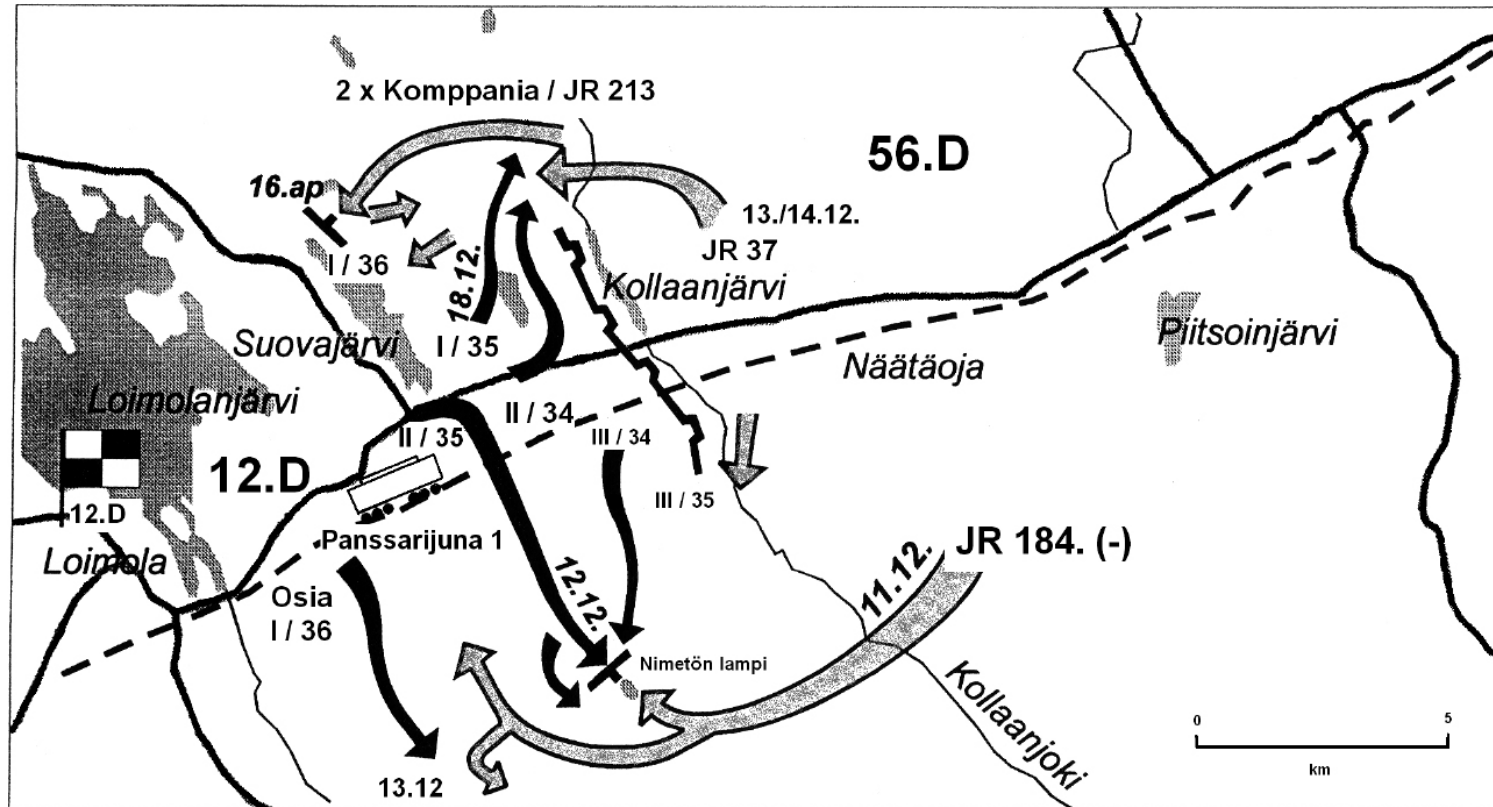
Detachment Battalion 9 arrived at the region west of Tshhmeika (Salmi Frontier Guard Station). Detachment Battalion 9, Ranger Battalion 9 and Ranger Battalion 3 attacked the peninsula of Hepojärvi-Kivijärvenkannas from the south-east. The attack was unsuccessful and the objective was not reached. I/JR 35 was fighting in the Kagrasuo region, about 8 km south-east of Kollaa.

March 13, 1940

Peace finally returns to Finland.



The battles from the Piitsinoja to the Näätäoja, December 4 and 5, 1939.



The battles on the Kollaa Front and its flanks, December 11 to 18, 1939.

Appendix 4

Ranked Snipers of the World

During the Winter War, Simo Häyhä's company commander, Lieutenant Juutilainen, or his second-in-command, was in charge of collecting the daily number of Simo's confirmed hits each day. After every single fighting day the number was collected and saved. This way the data remained current and updated all the time. In total Simo fought for fewer than a hundred days, making his daily total very high.

Top-ranked snipers of the world 1939–2005

	Name	Conflict	Nation	Kills
1.	Simo Häyhä	Winter War/WWII	Finland	542
2.	Ivan Sidorenko	WWII	USSR	500
3.	Nikolay Yakovlevich Ilyin	WWII	USSR	496
4.	Kulbertinov	WWII	USSR	487
5.	V. N. Pchelintsev	WWII	USSR	456
6.	Mikhail Budenkov	WWII	USSR	437
7.	Fyodor Matveevich Okhlopkov	WWII	USSR	429
8.	Fyodor Djachenko	WWII	USSR	425
9.	Vasilij Ivanovich Golosov	WWII	USSR	422
10.	Afanasy Gordienko	WWII	USSR	417
11.	Stepan Petrenko	WWII	USSR	412
12.	Sulo Kolkka	Winter War/WWII	Finland	400+
13.	Erwin Konig	WWII	Germany	400
14.	Vasili Zaitsev	WWII	USSR	400
15.	Francis Pegahmagabow	WWII	Canada	378
16.	Semen D. Nomokonov	WWII	USSR	367
17.	Abdukhani Idrisov	WWII	USSR	349
18.	Philipp Yakolevich Rubaho	WWII	USSR	346
19.	Matthäus Hetzenauer	WWII	Germany	345
20.	Victor Ivanovich Medvedev	WWII	USSR	331
21.	E. Nicholaev	WWII	USSR	324
22.	Leonid Yakovlevich Butkevich	WWII	USSR	315
23.	Nikolai Ilyin	WWII	USSR	315
24.	Lyudmila M. Pavlichenko	WWII	USSR	309
25.	Alexander Pavlovich Lebedev	WWII	USSR	307
26.	Ivan Pavlovich Gorelikov	WWII	USSR	305
27.	Ivan Petrovich Antonov	WWII	USSR	302
28.	Heinz Thorvald	WWII	Germany	300
29.	Gennadij Iosifovich Velichko	WWII	USSR	300
30.	Moisej Timofeyevich Usik	WWII	USSR	300



A Finnish skiing patrol in Salla region.

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Robie Kulokivi: Private collection

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